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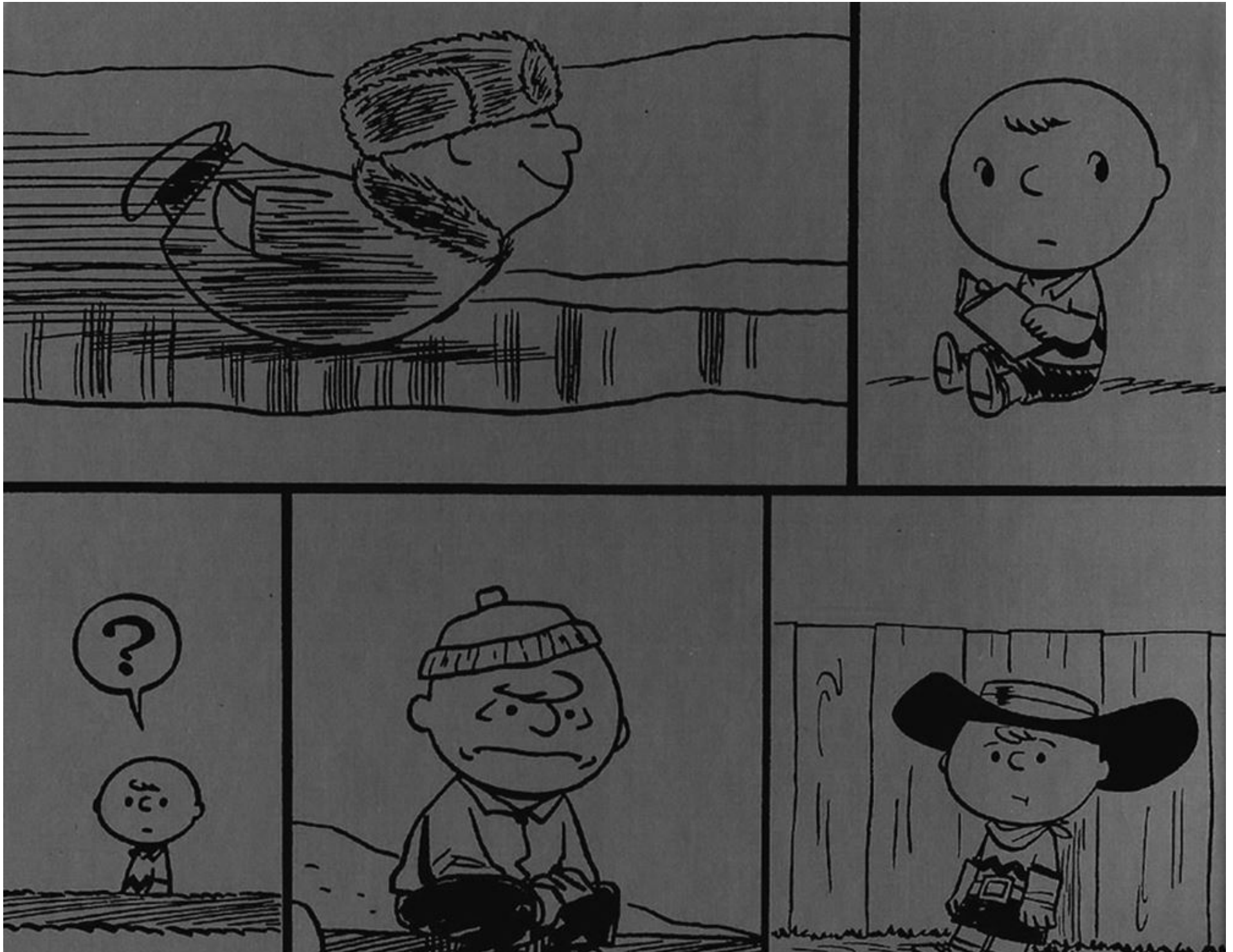
COMPLETE PEANUTS

Complete Peanuts v1 (1950-1952)

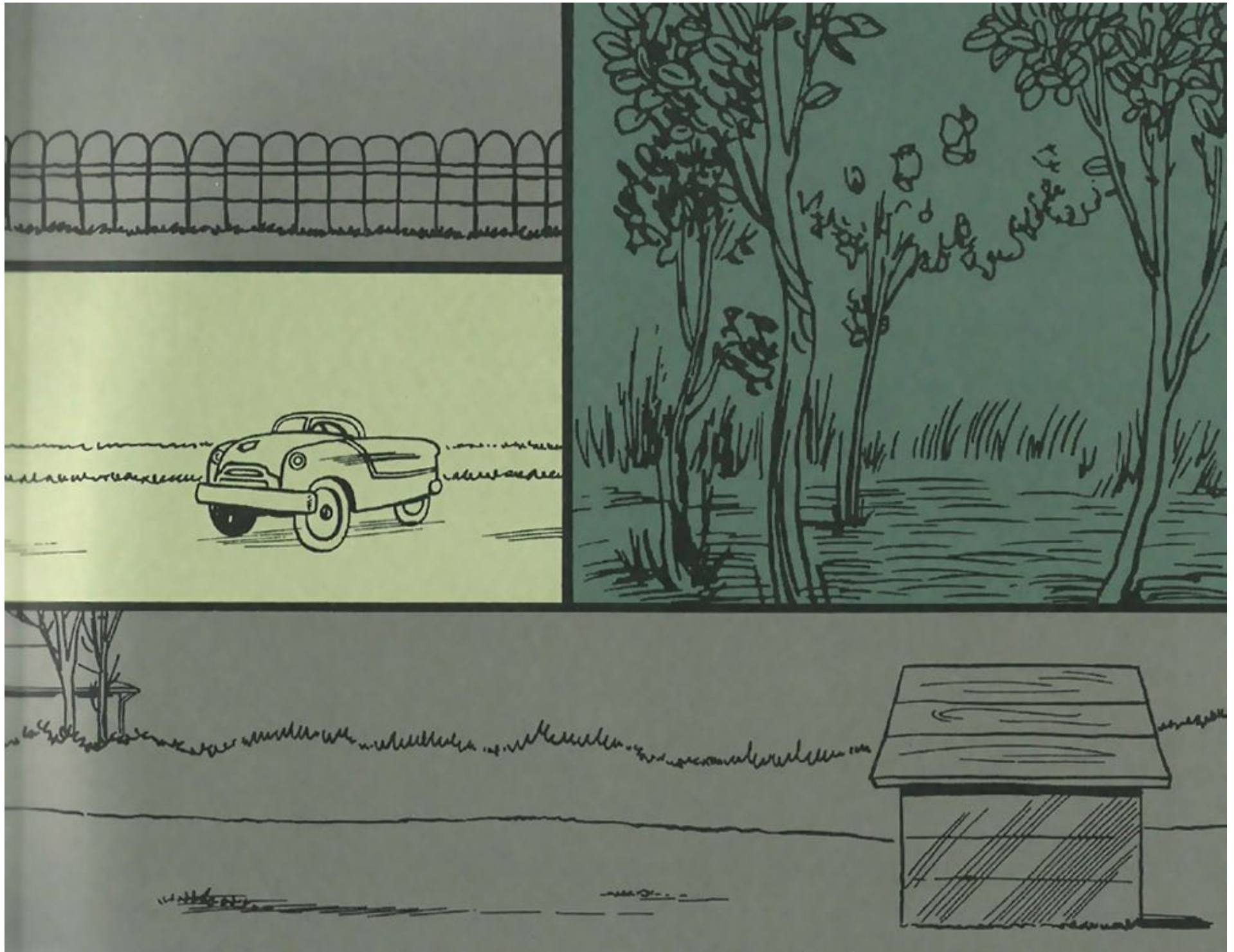
Complete Peanuts v1 (1950-1952) Reading

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INTRODUCTION by GARRISON KEILLOR

Sparky Schulz (b. 11/26/22) was a shy, self-conscious kid with bad skin, too light to play football, not tall enough for basketball, the only child of Carl and Dena Schulz of St. Paul, a painful student at St. Paul Central High School, failing at everything, wanting to talk to girls and not knowing how, tormented by teachers and other bullies, finding solace at the movies, sitting in the lovely dark and watching Victor McLaglen in *Lost Patrol* and Gary Cooper in *Beau Geste* and Laurel

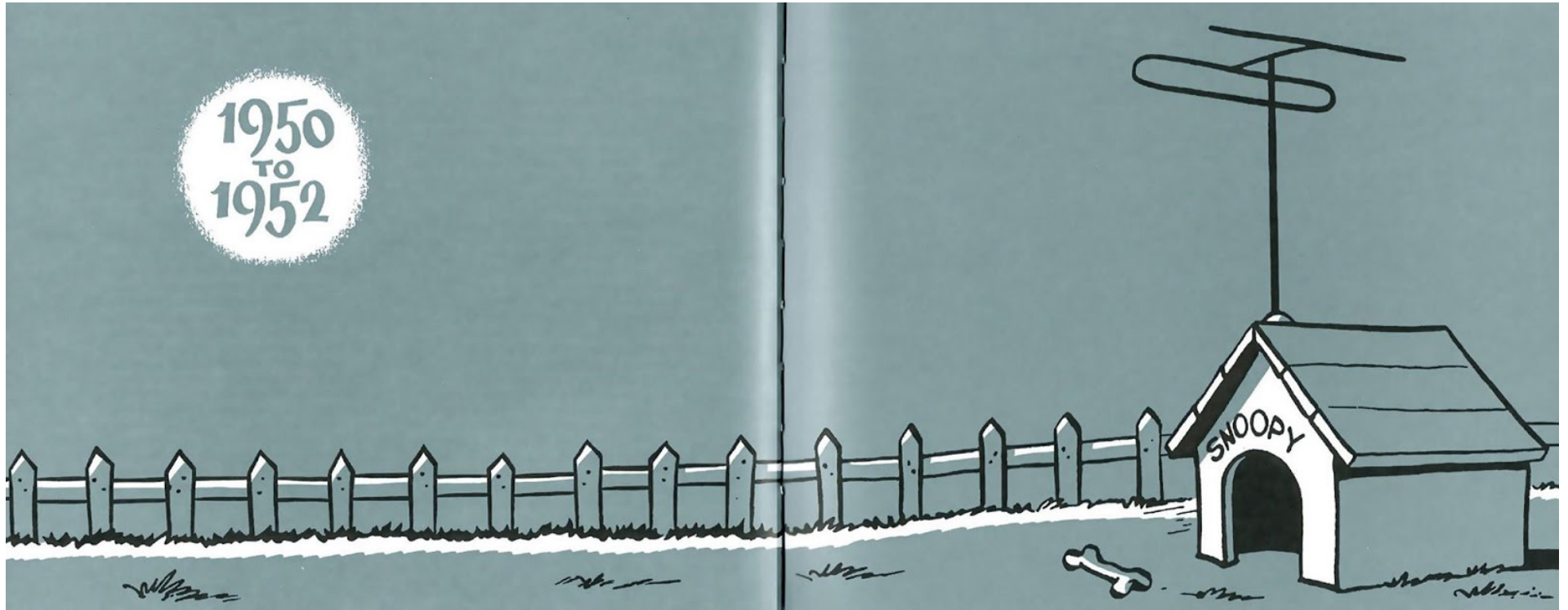
and Hardy and Tarzan, and reading the funny papers, *Popeye* and *Captain Easy* and *Wash Tubbs*. Hundreds of other St. Paul boys were in the same boat, whether Sparky knew it or not, and negotiated the white waters of adolescence and came out into the calm pond of Actuarial or Home Loans or Homiletics, but Sparky had a good hand for drawing with a pencil, at least compared to other kids at Central High he did, and when his mom saw an ad for a University of Minnesota

extension class in cartooning, he enrolled in it, and that, as they say, was that. The boy got a notion that he had a Gift and found an endeavor that quickened his heart and might be his Calling and this miraculous turn of events steadied him through the travails of the Nineteen Forties. He was drafted by the Army in 1943, about the time his mom was diagnosed with cancer. She looked up at him from her bed and said, "I suppose that we should say goodbye" and died the next day. After training at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, he shipped off to Europe with the infantry, the leader of a machine gun squad, a serious soldier, and put aside cartooning until he returned home. He hung around St. Paul for a few years, taught at the commercial art correspondence school in Minneapolis where he had formerly been a student, got good at cartoon lettering, sold some gag cartoons to *The Saturday Evening Post*, and then, encouraged by a fellow instructor named Frank Wing, focused on drawing little kids and created a strip cartoon called *Li'l Folks* which he sold to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* which ran it in the women's section. It was an odd strip, no adults present, only kids, who were not little rascals



like the Katzenjammers or Little Iodine, but contemplative creatures capable of long brooding thoughts and comic pathos. He drew the strip for two years for \$10 a week and then went in to the paper and asked for a raise and for a better location in the paper and was turned down. "Then I better quit," said Sparky. "All right," said the editor. That was in the spring of 1950. Schulz was 27. He got on the train to New York and took his strip to Jim Freeman, the editorial director of United Feature Syndicate, who snapped it up and the first *Peanuts* strip appeared on October 2, 1950. And that is the St. Paul chapter of the legend of Charles Schulz. Good grief.

We St. Paulites wish we could make it up to Sparky and since his death the city has gone through waves of *Peanuts* sculptures, polyurethane Charlie Browns and Lucys and Linuses and Snoopys, hanging out in Rice Park and on Selby Avenue near Sparky's dad's old barbershop and all over town. We'd give anything if we could go back to 1950 and say the right thing and not drive him away to Santa Rosa, California. I would mention in my city's defense that Sparky took up golf here



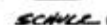
and that gave him pleasure and he became active in the Church of God and found a spiritual home there. He became a serious reader here after the war, riding the streetcar back and forth to his job in downtown Minneapolis, reading Tolstoy and Thomas Wolfe and Fitzgerald, and he loved his time at the correspondence school. So he did find a degree of happiness here. We weren't a gulag in his life. He learned a lot about pen technique here that helped him get Linus's hair right and the zigzags on Charlie Brown's sweater and Snoopy sitting on the doghouse writing on the typewriter. And *Peanuts* is more about St. Paul than it is about Santa Rosa, I'd say. Snow falls on Snoopy's doghouse. The beautiful modesty and understatement of the strip strike us as Midwestern. Charlie Brown is a stoic like us. He doesn't imagine that some magical book or herb or 12-step program is going to turn him into Charles Green. And it's the Great Pumpkin who comes at Halloween, not the Blissful Artichoke or the Sacred Asparagus. .

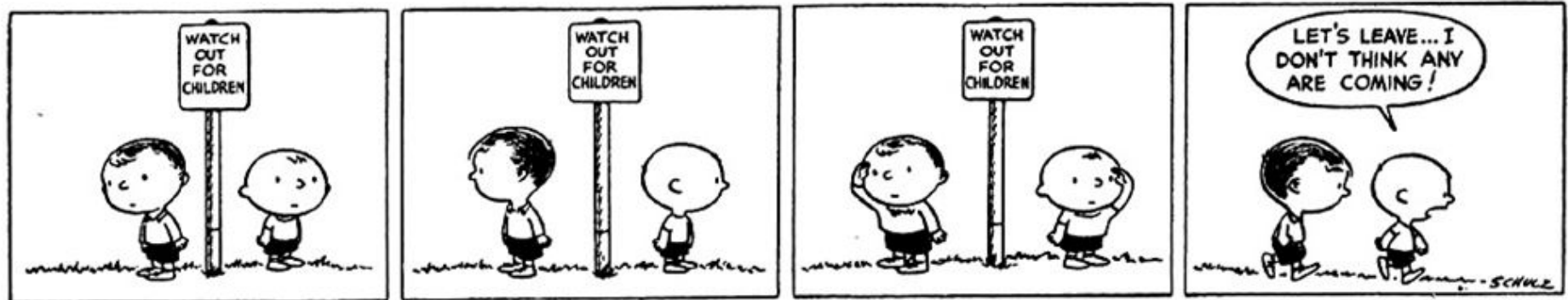
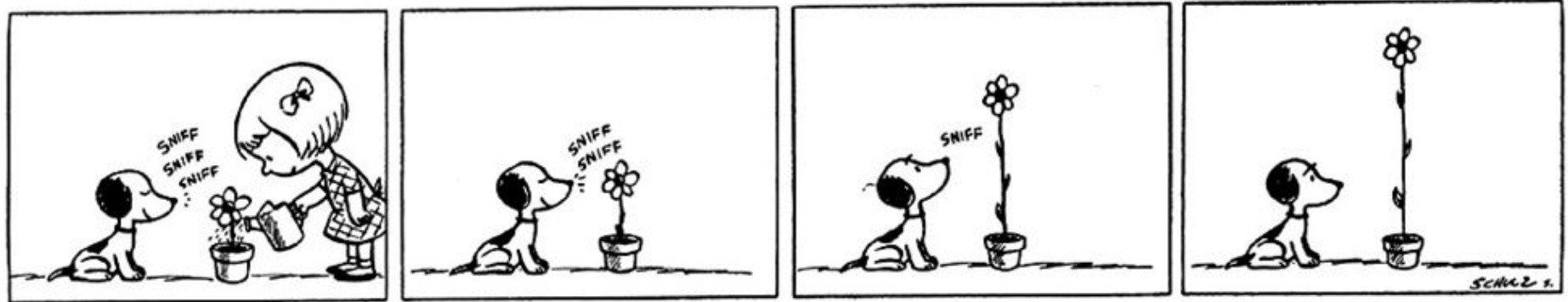
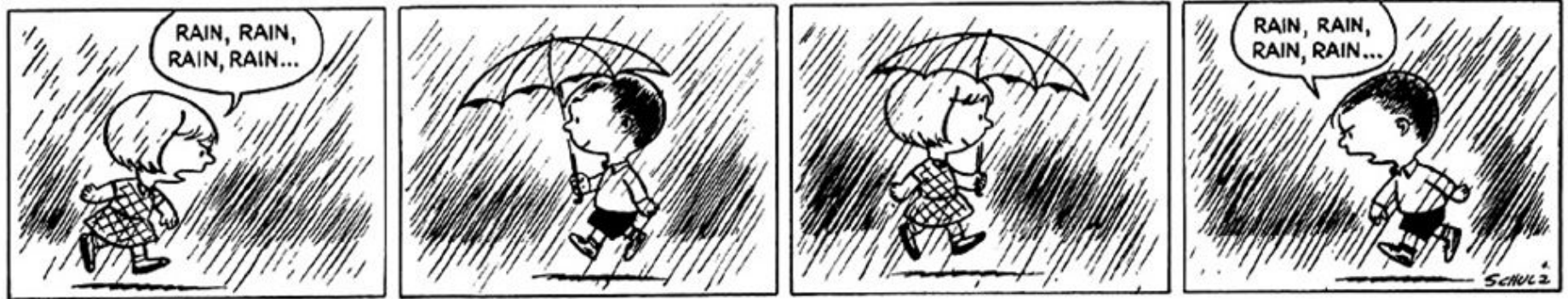
Charles Schulz was an innovative genius of American comics and also the marathon man, drawing strip after four-panel strip, batch

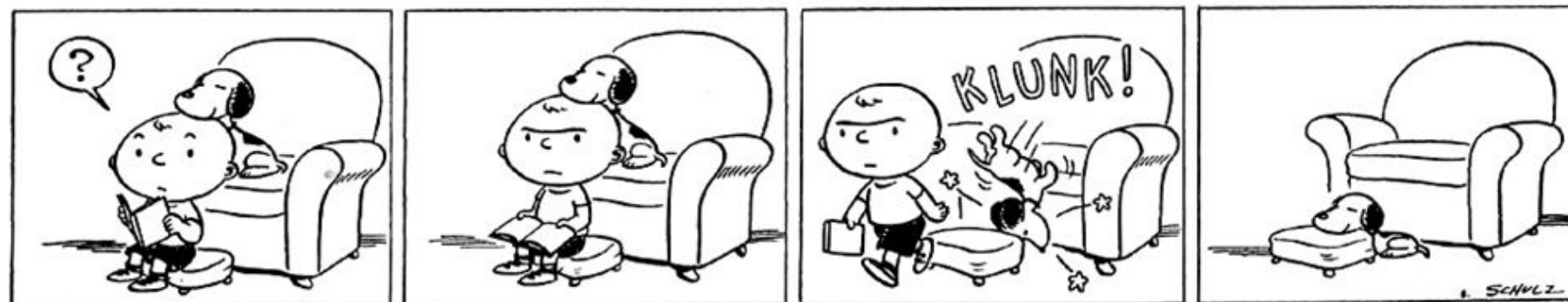


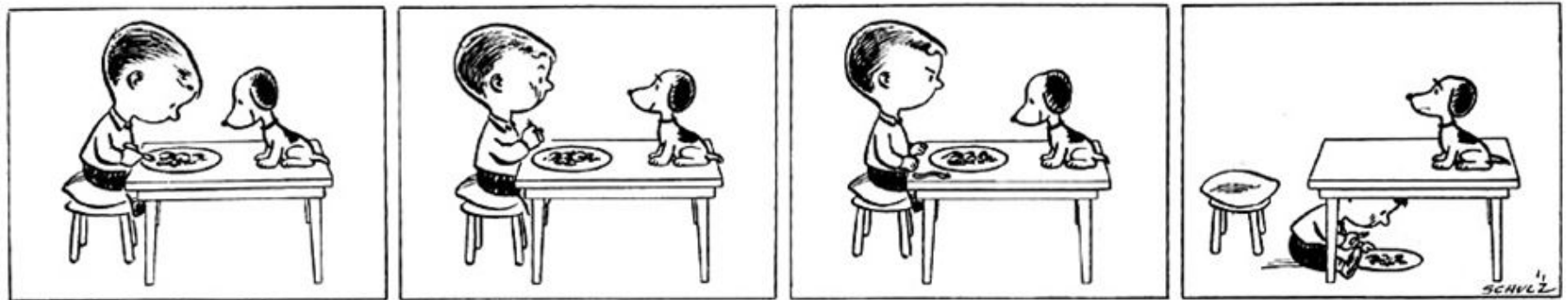
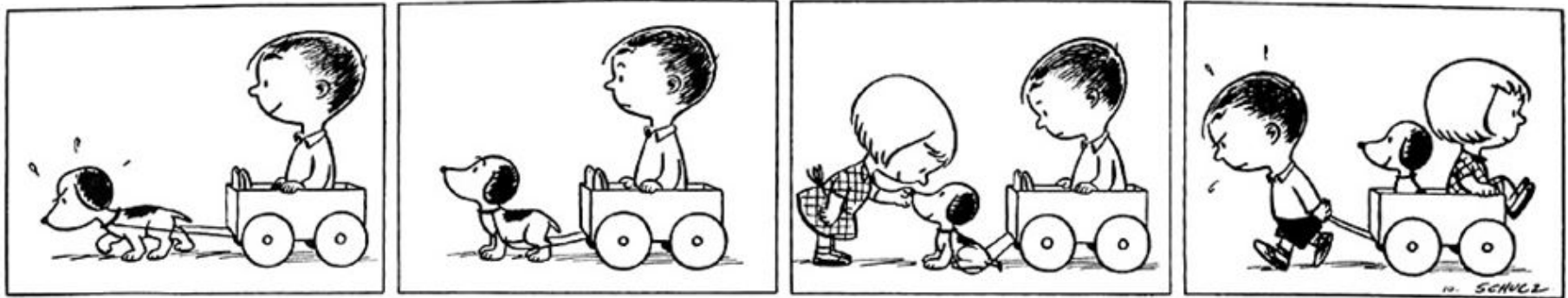
after batch, writing the storyboards for the TV specials, year after year, creating a fantasy world that connected to kids as well as adults and all based on powerful iconic characters who express deep feelings of loneliness and resentment and despair. The feeling that everything is against us. The craving for love. An enormous earnestness about doing the right thing. There is not much in *Peanuts* that is shallow or heedless. Schroeder puts everything he has into those notes of Beethoven's and Sparky Schulz put everything he had into the strip. He didn't live to see the rise of graphic novels but he would have admired them as he admired all true artists, R. Crumb or George Herriman or Flannery O'Connor or Fitzgerald, all the class acts. Like Fitzgerald, he left St. Paul wounded and realized his greatness

elsewhere and we remember him here with love and admiration and gratitude for his gifts and his heroic endurance. If you stand on Selby Avenue in the late afternoon, just east of Snelling where Carl's barbershop stood, you will see any number of shy, self-conscious 14-year-olds walk past and in Sparky's memory, wish them a good and glorious life like his.









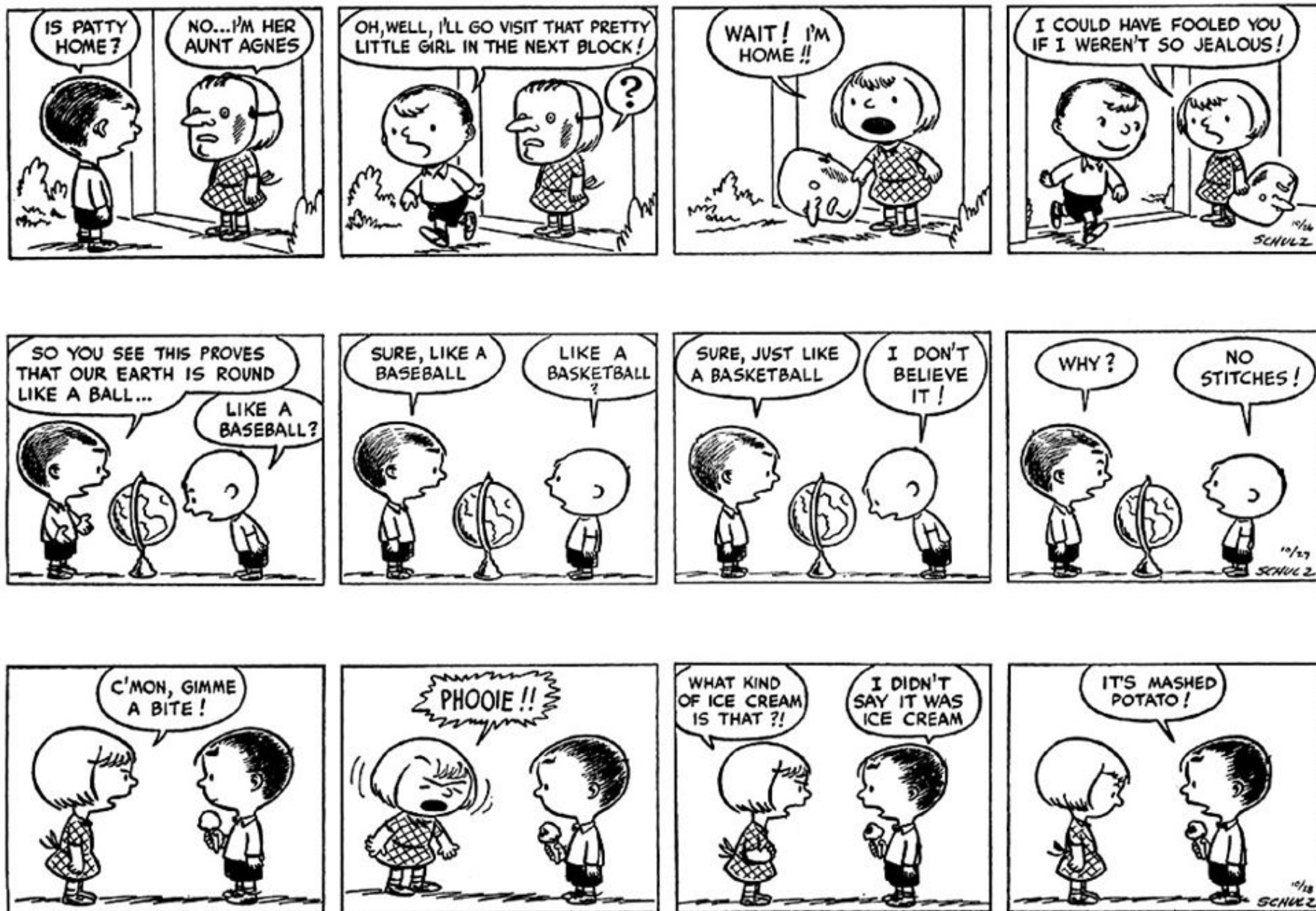


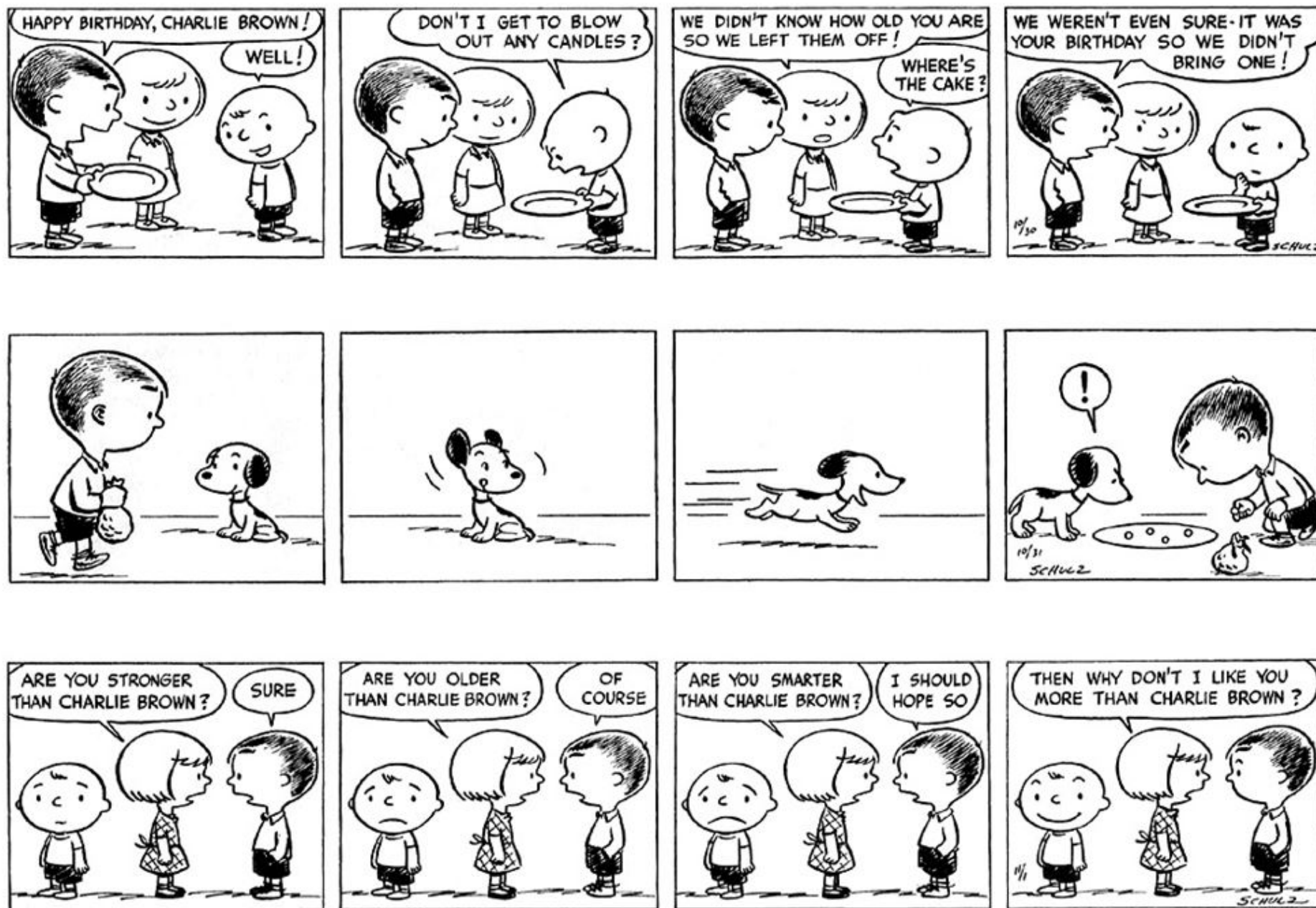
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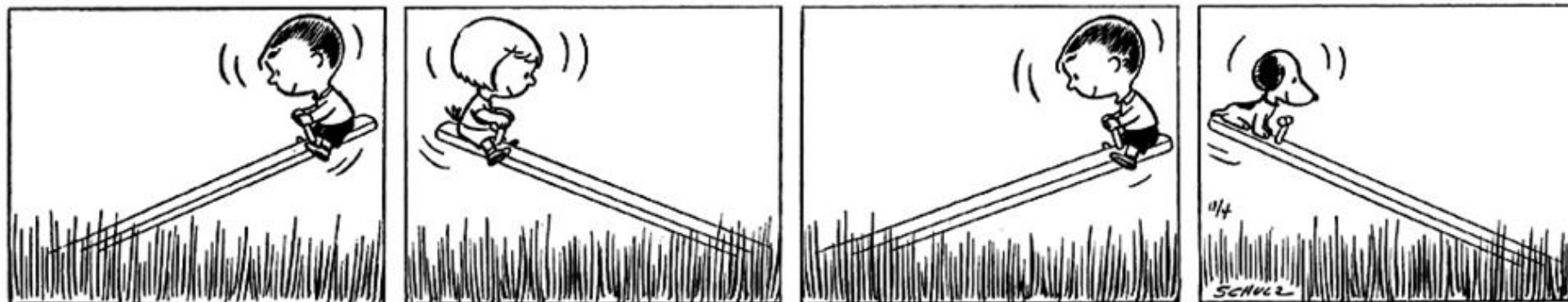
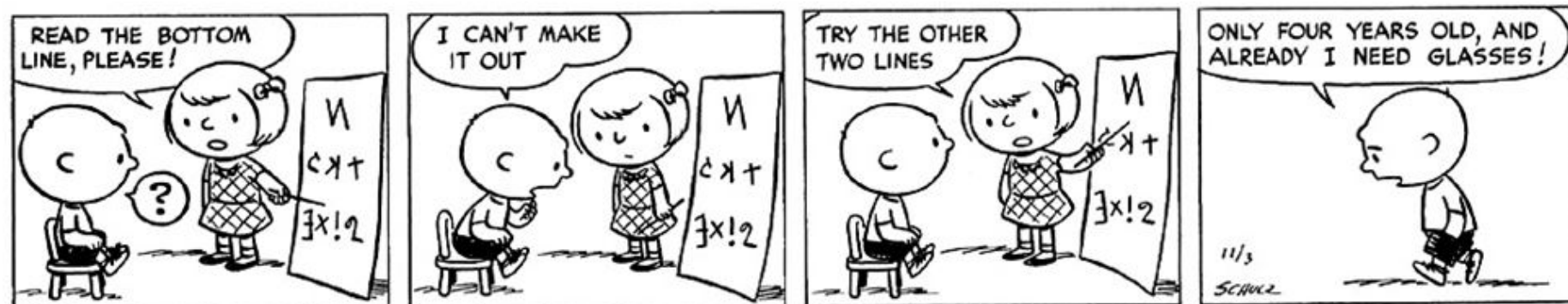
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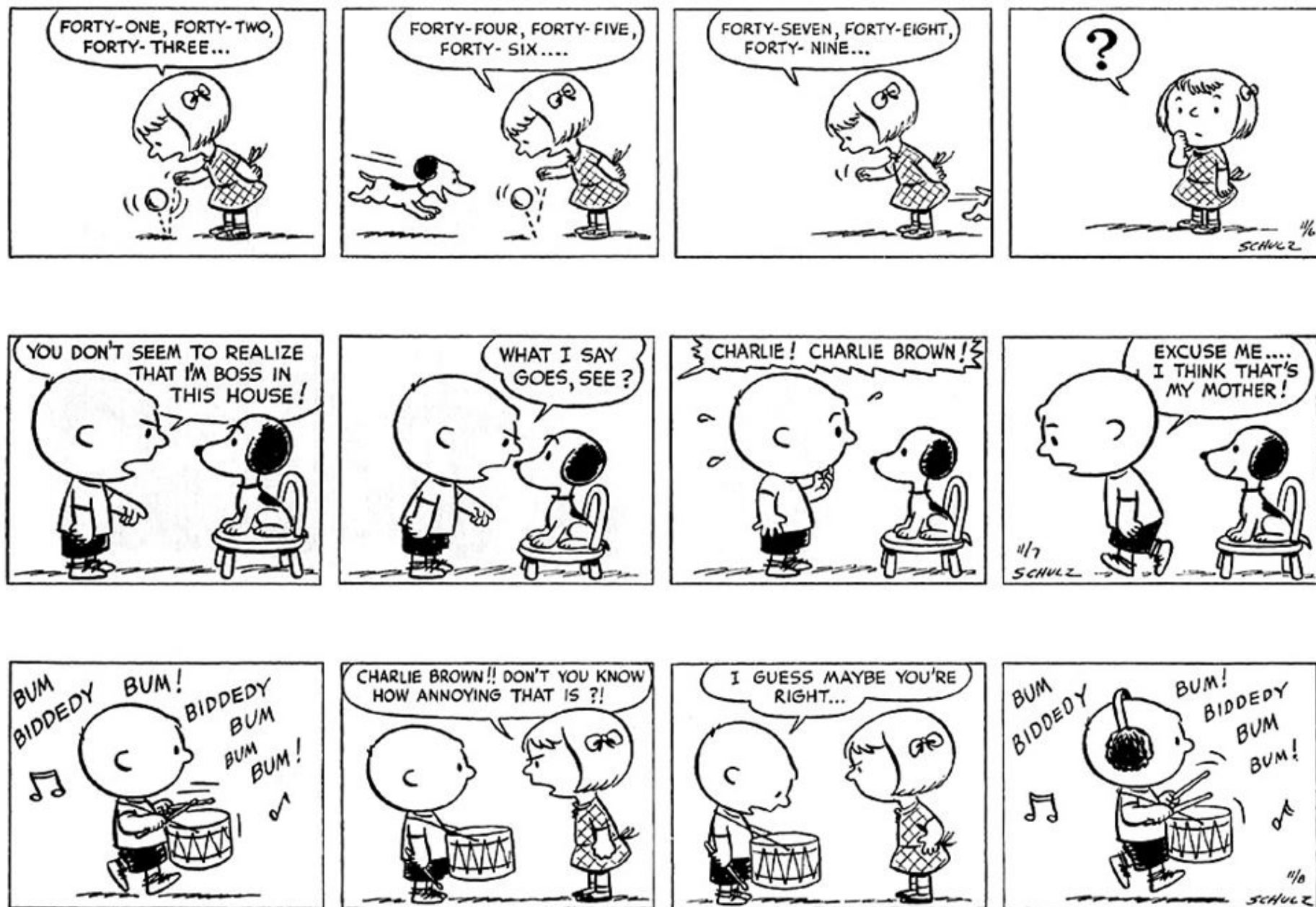


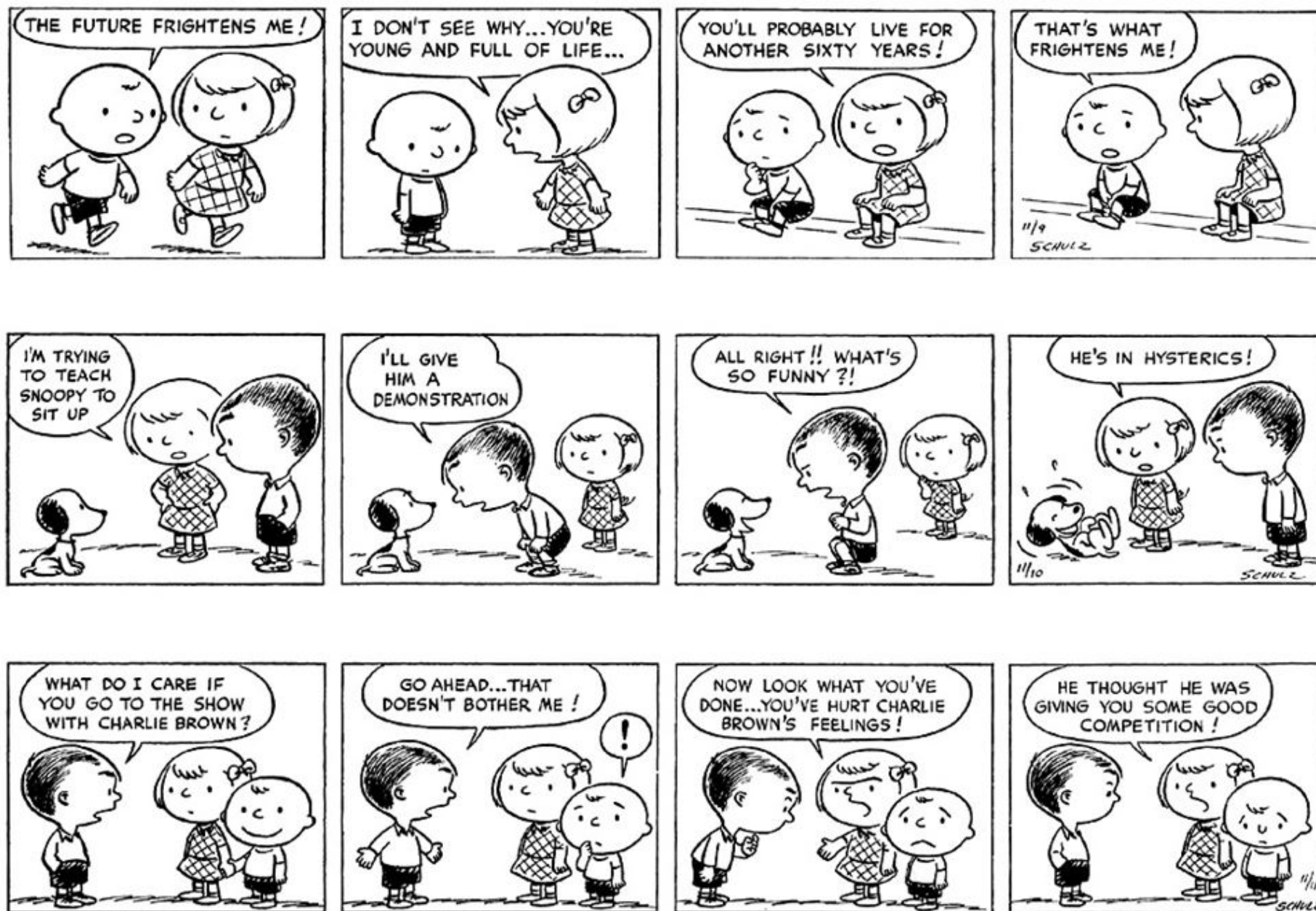


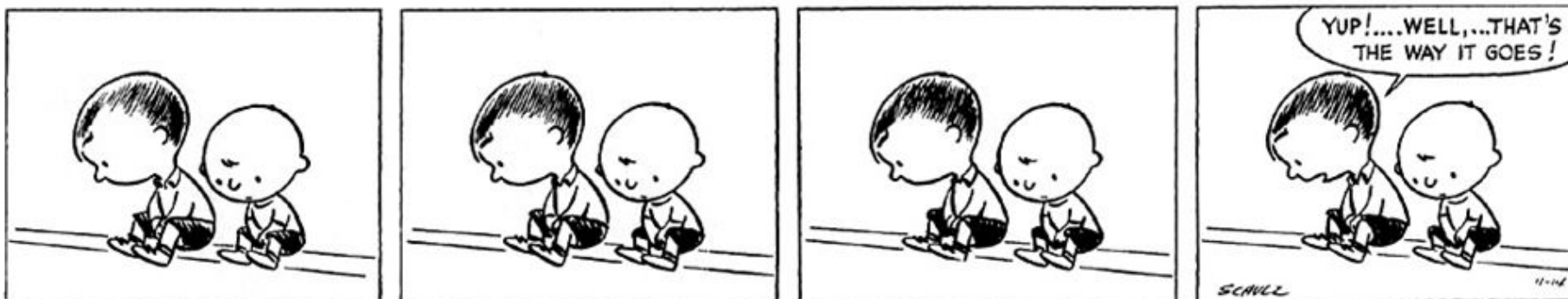
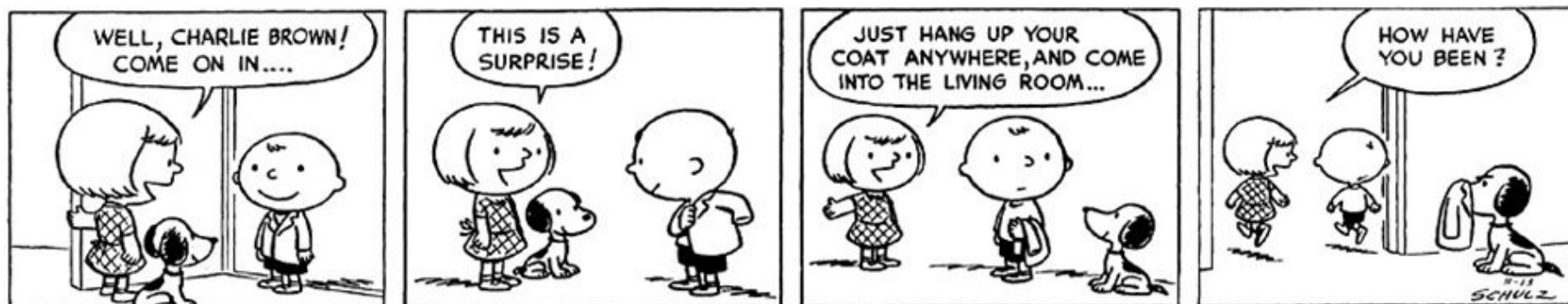




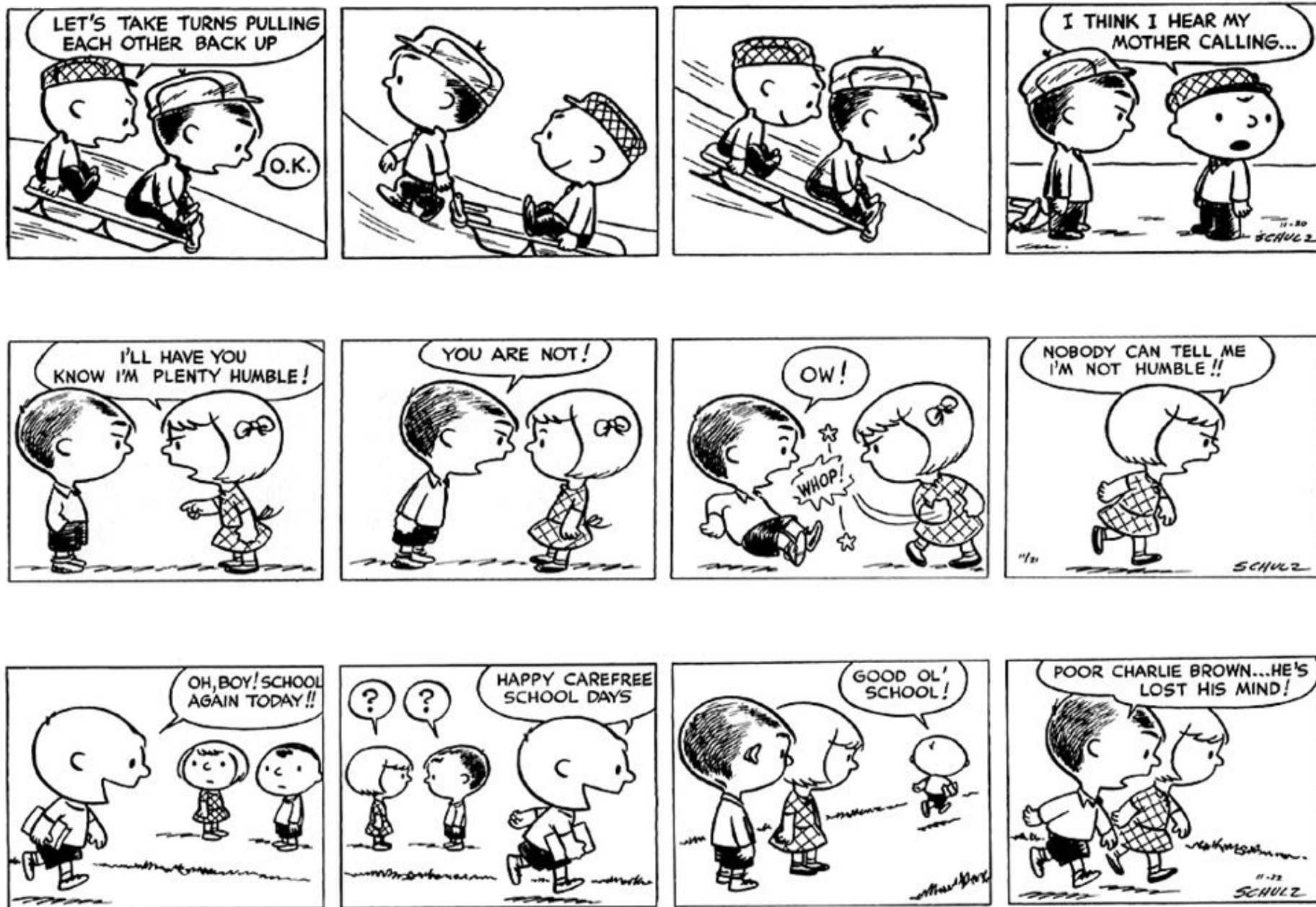






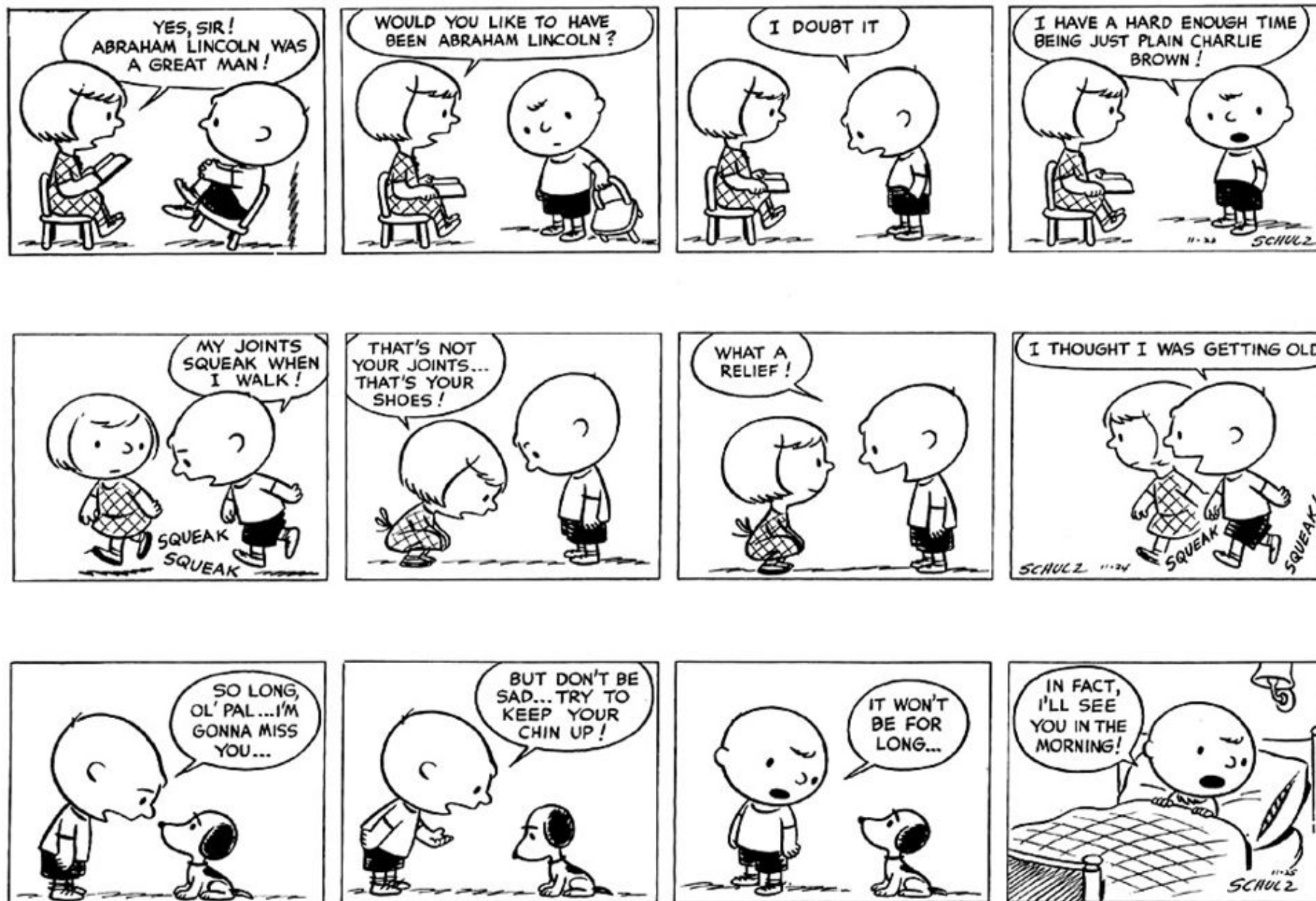






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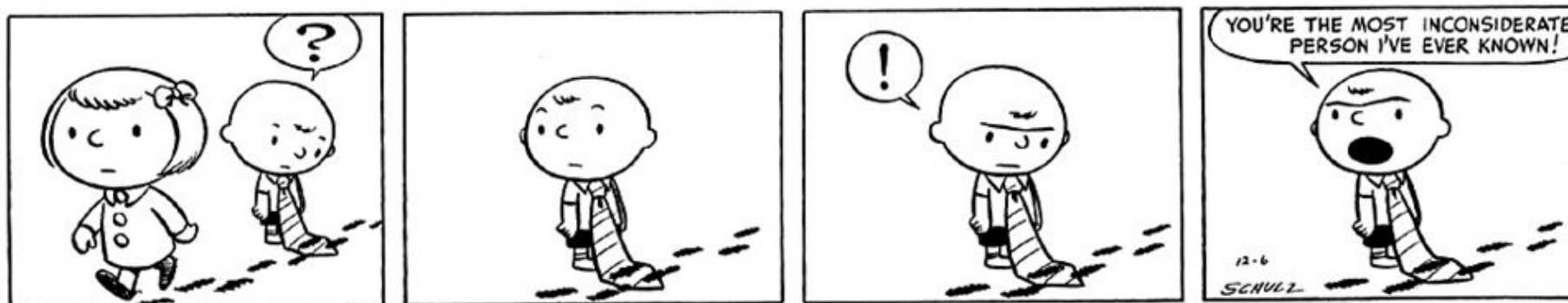


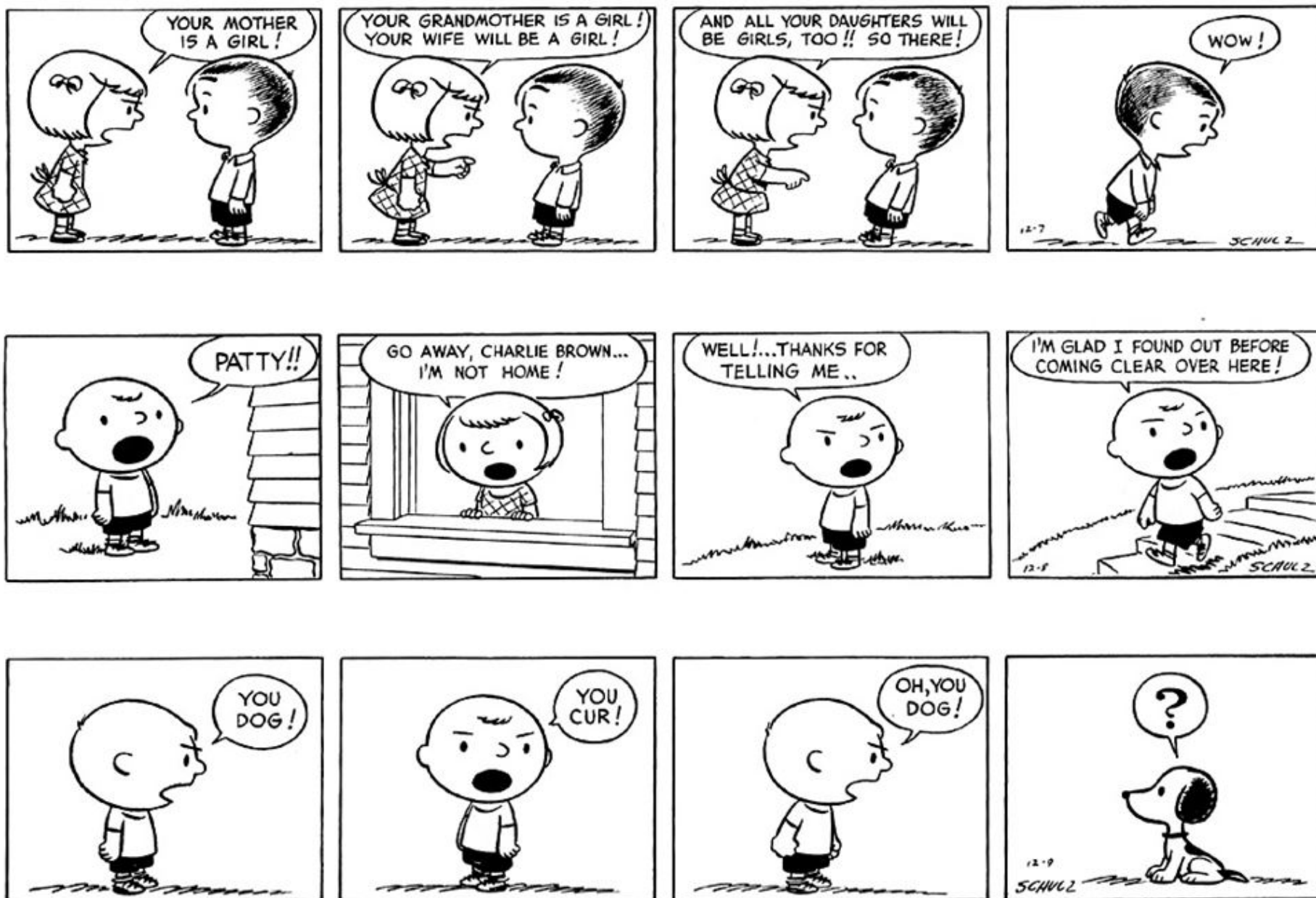


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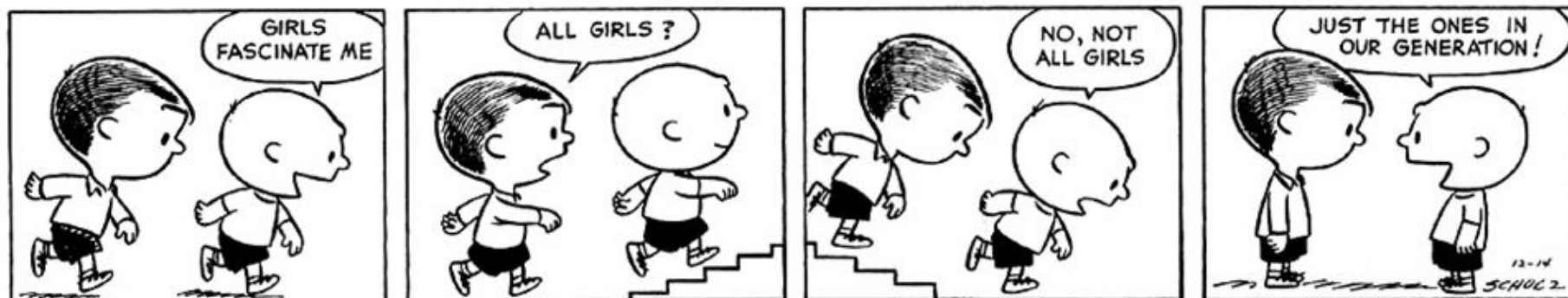
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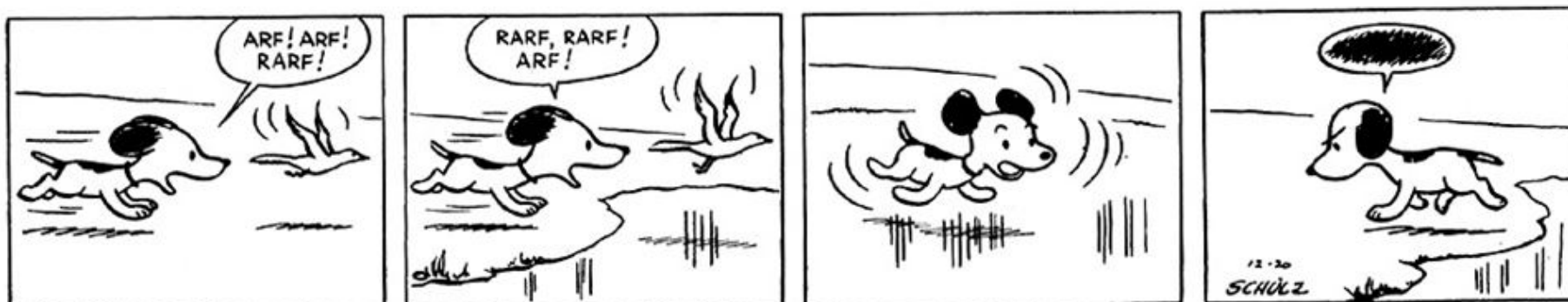










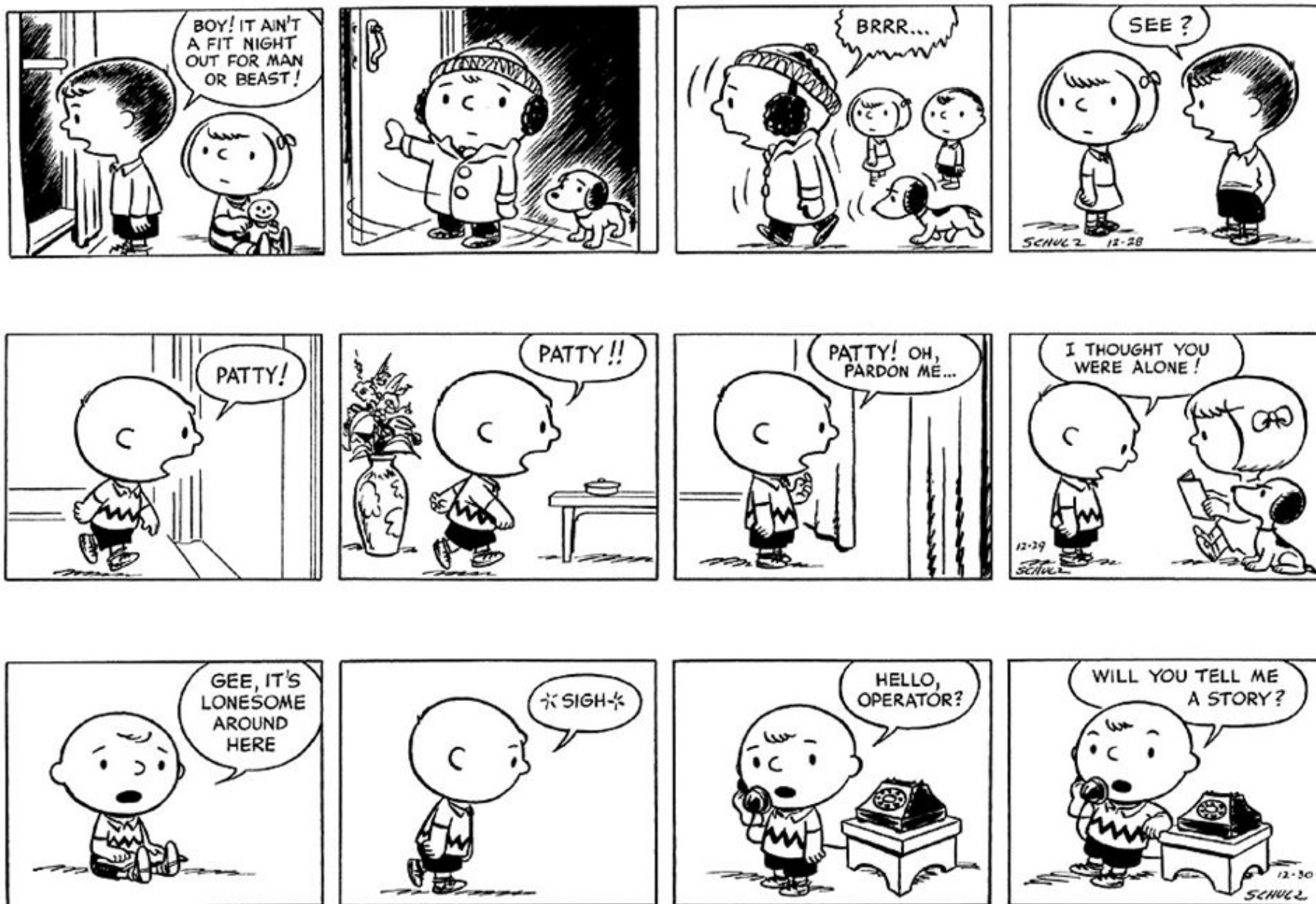






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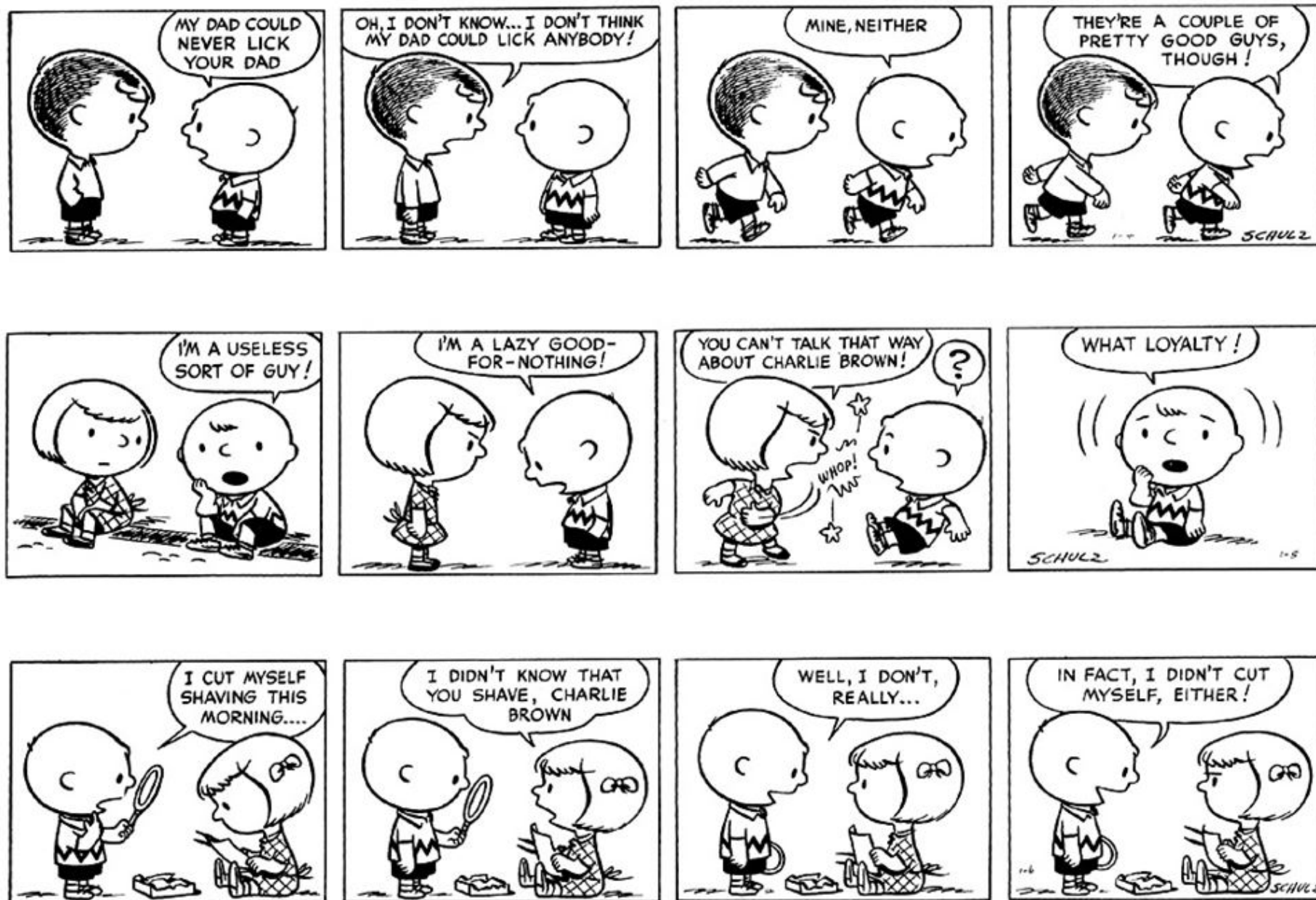
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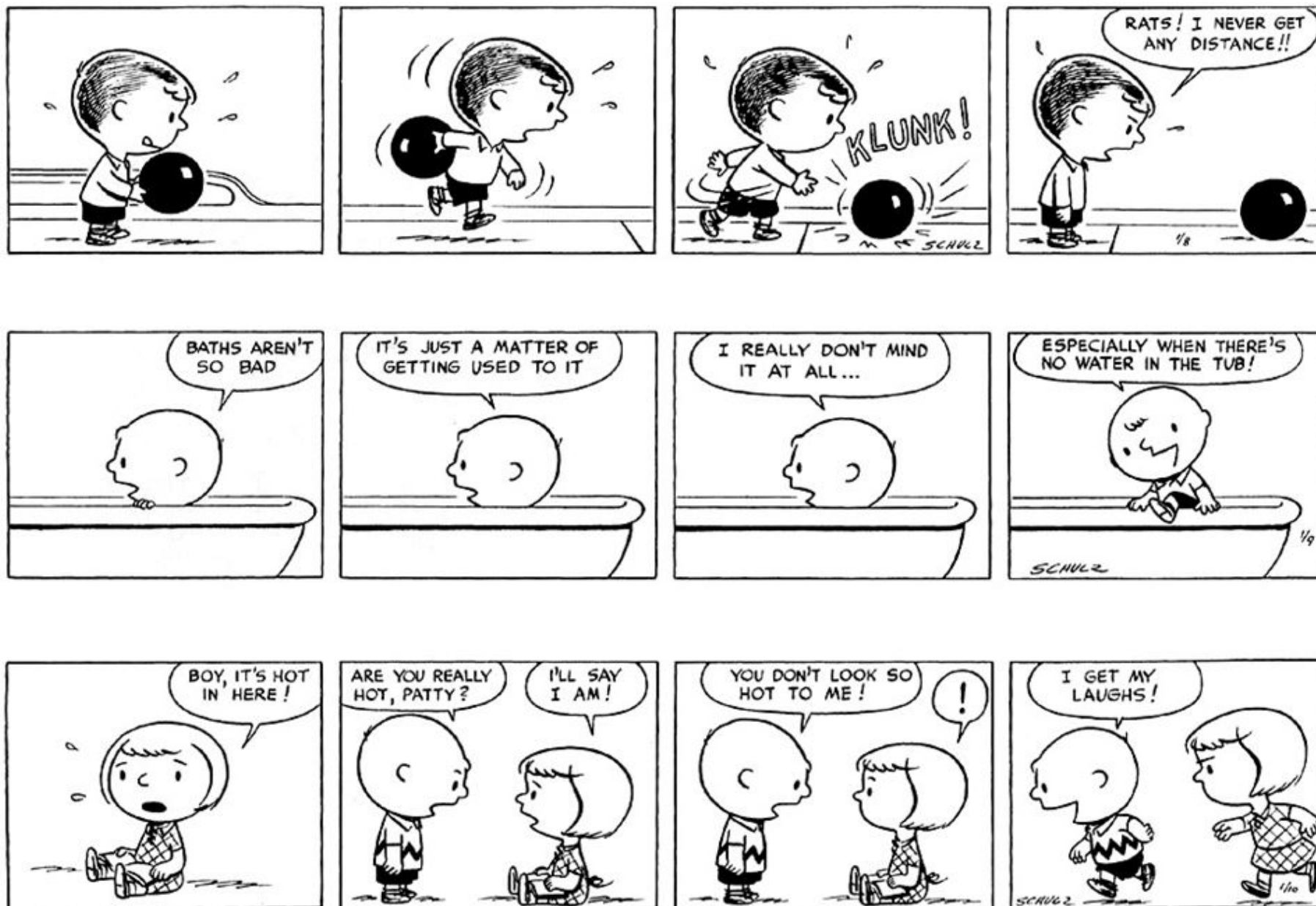


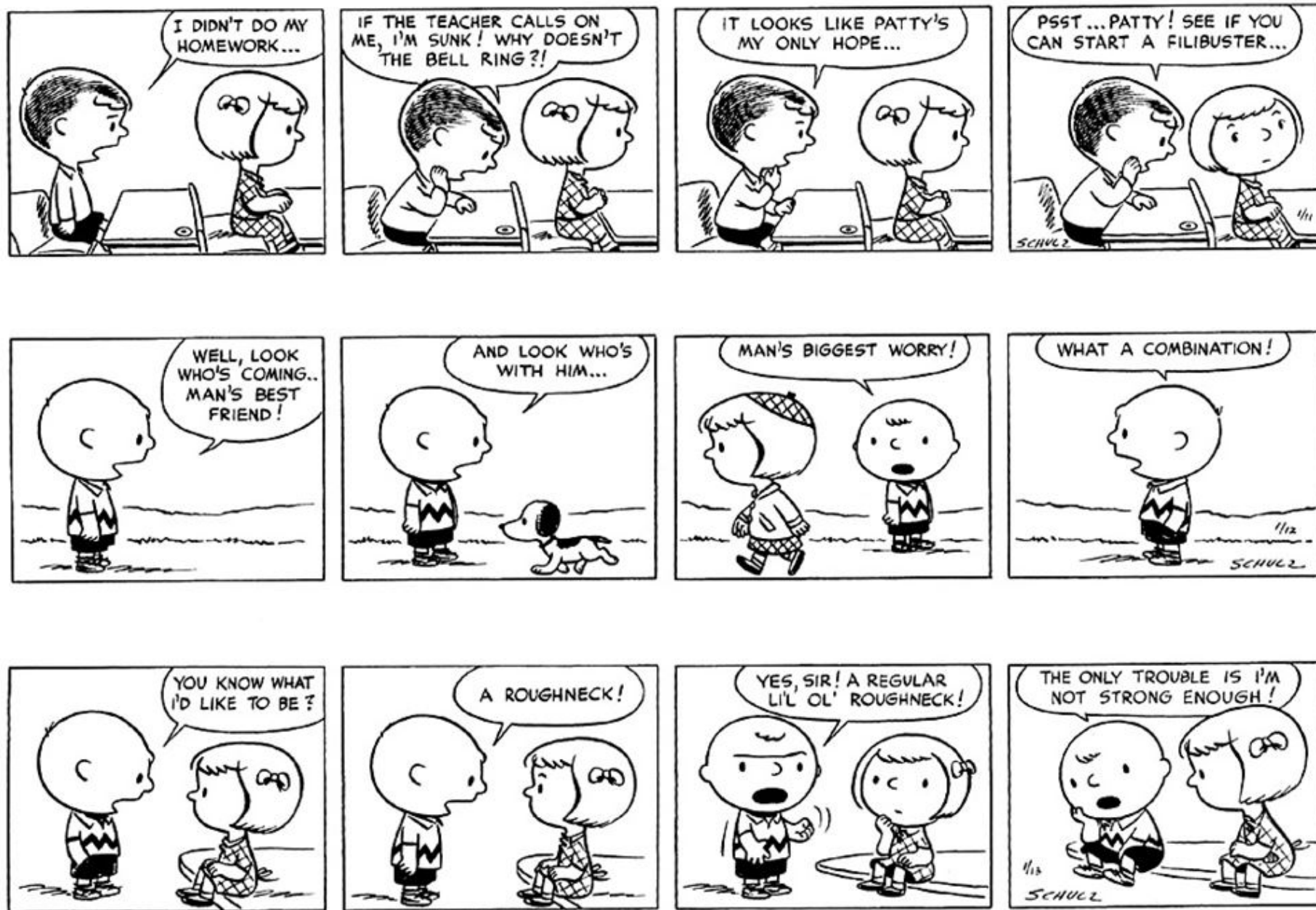


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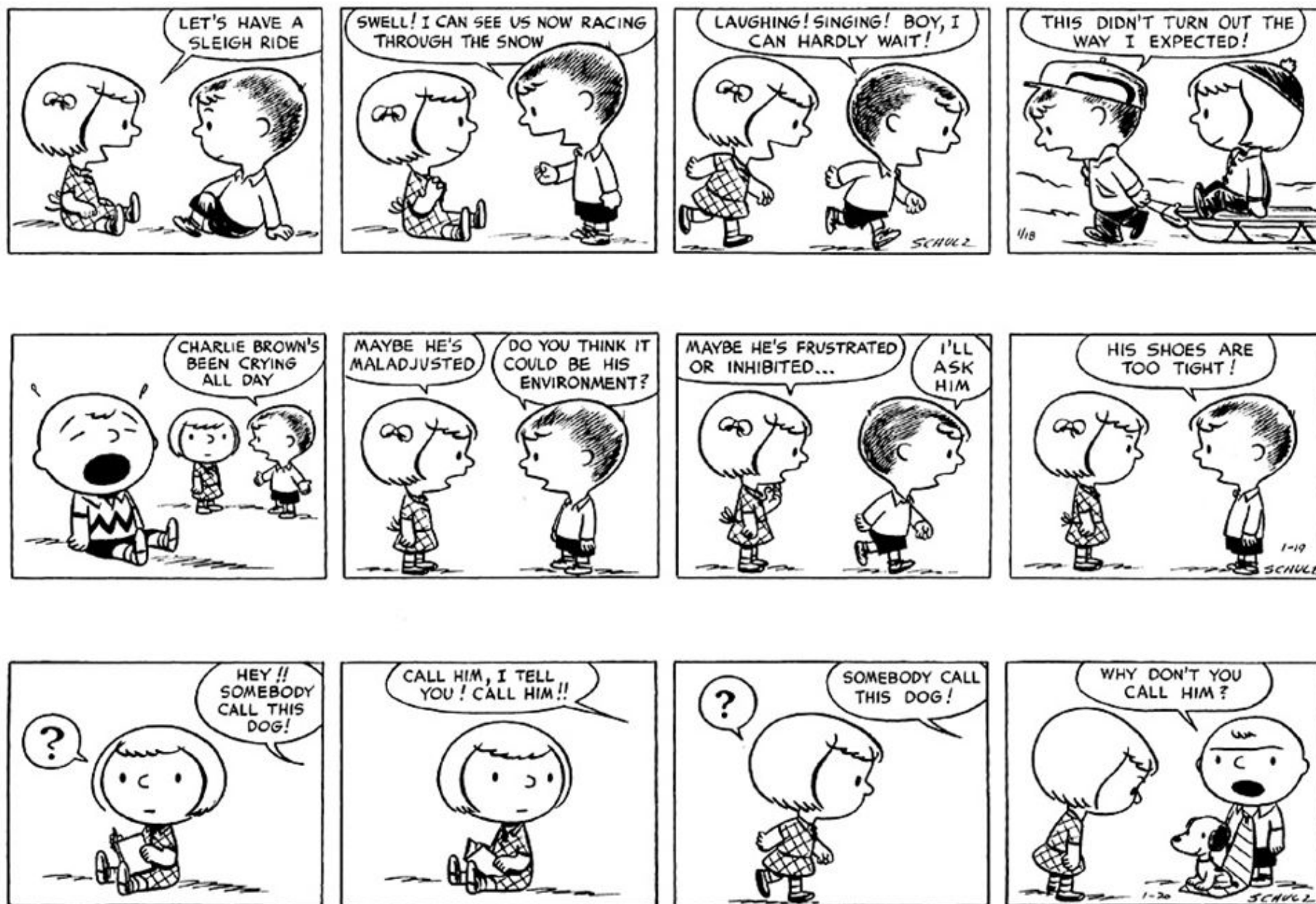
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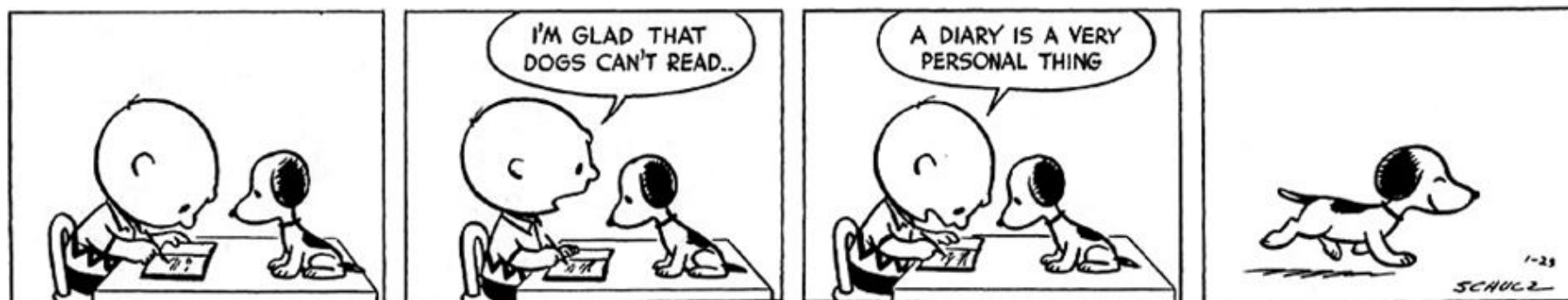






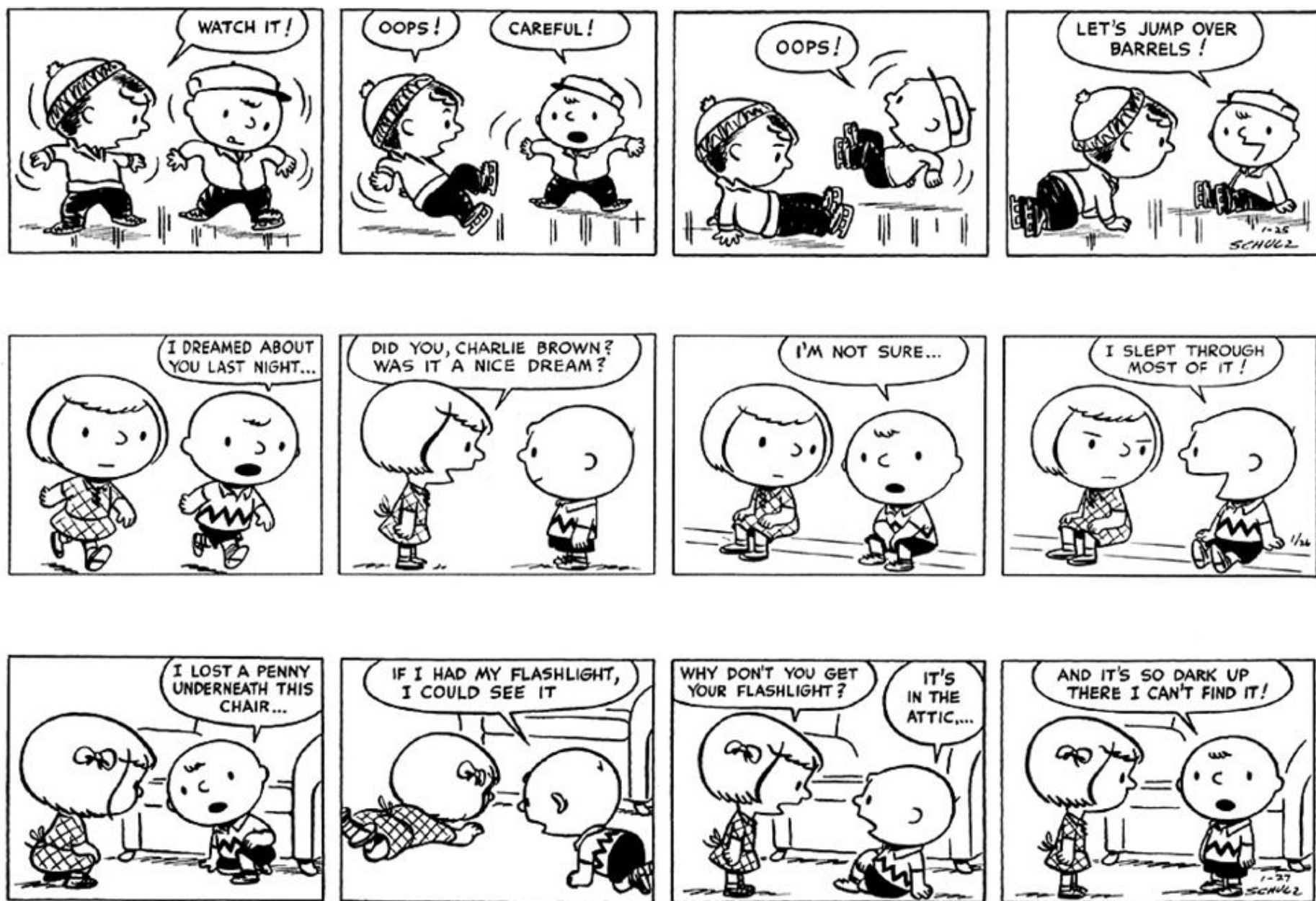




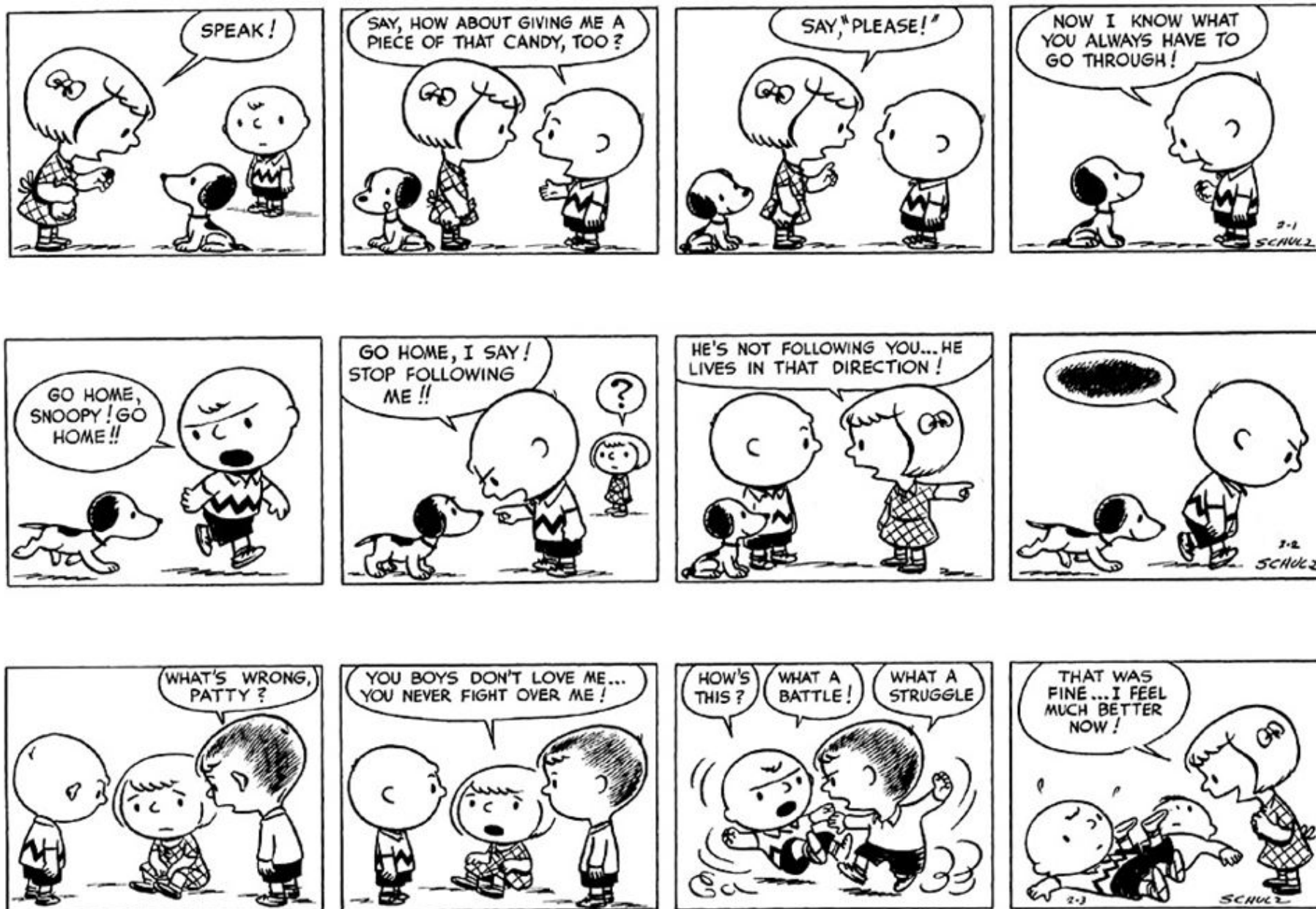


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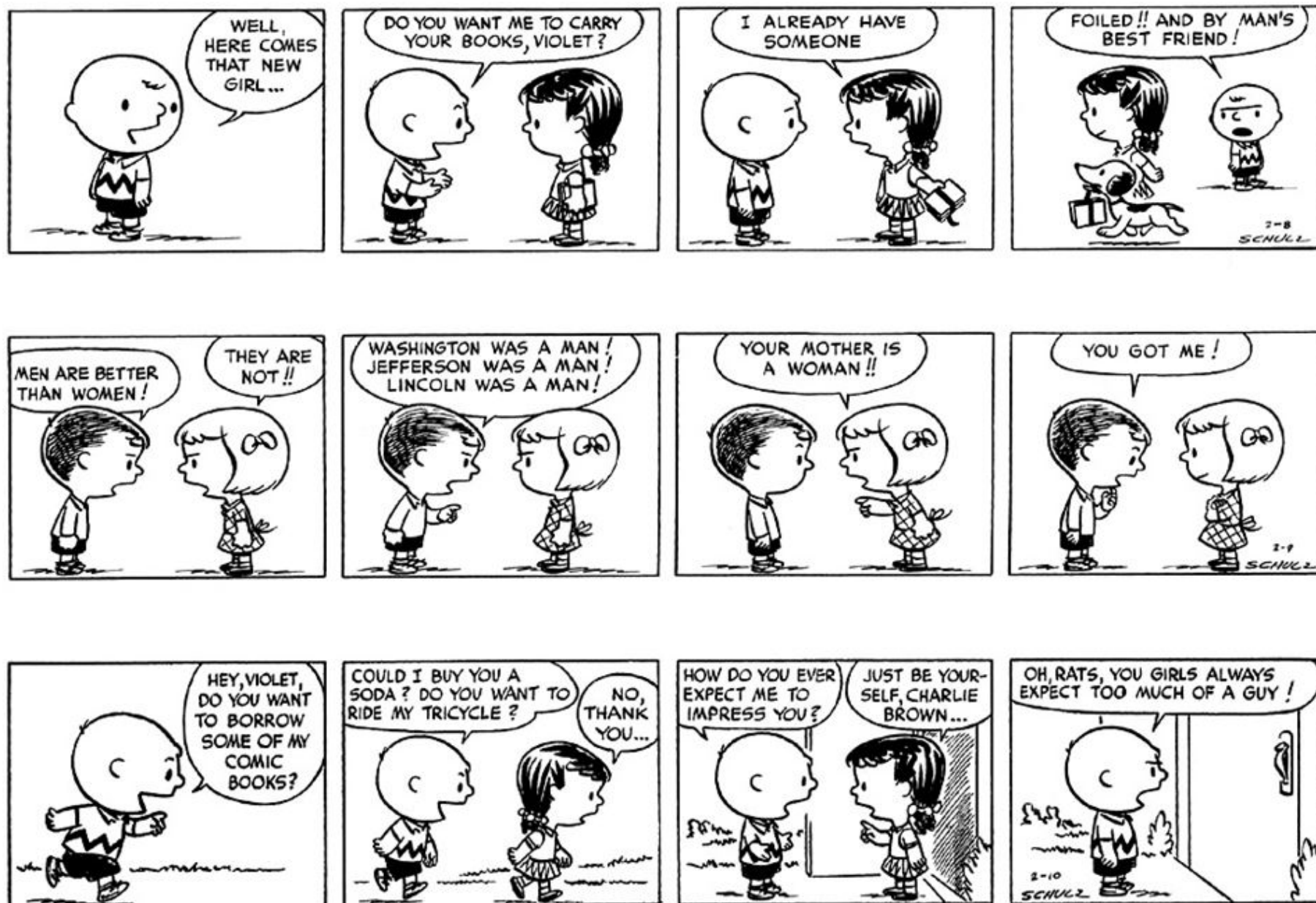
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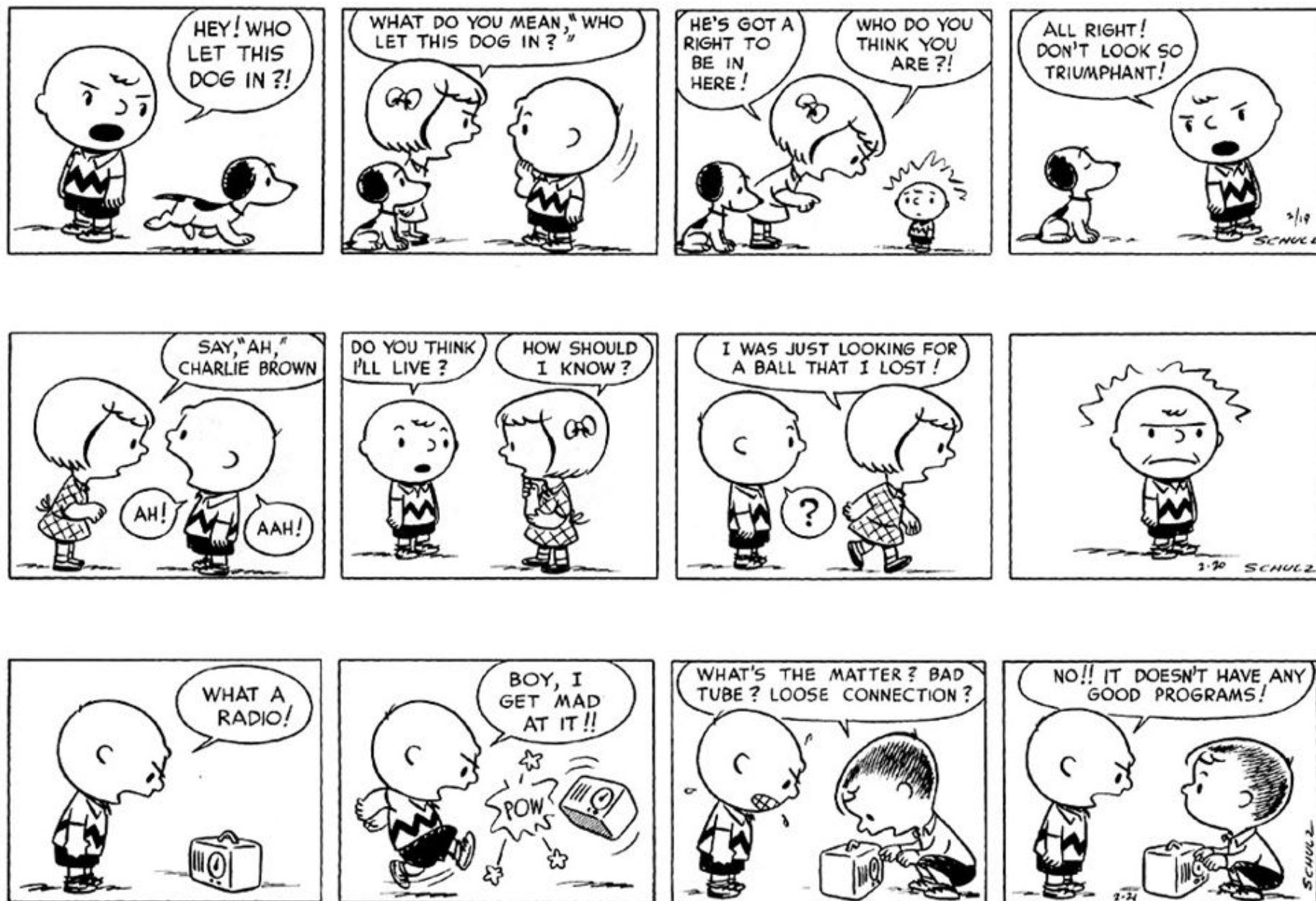








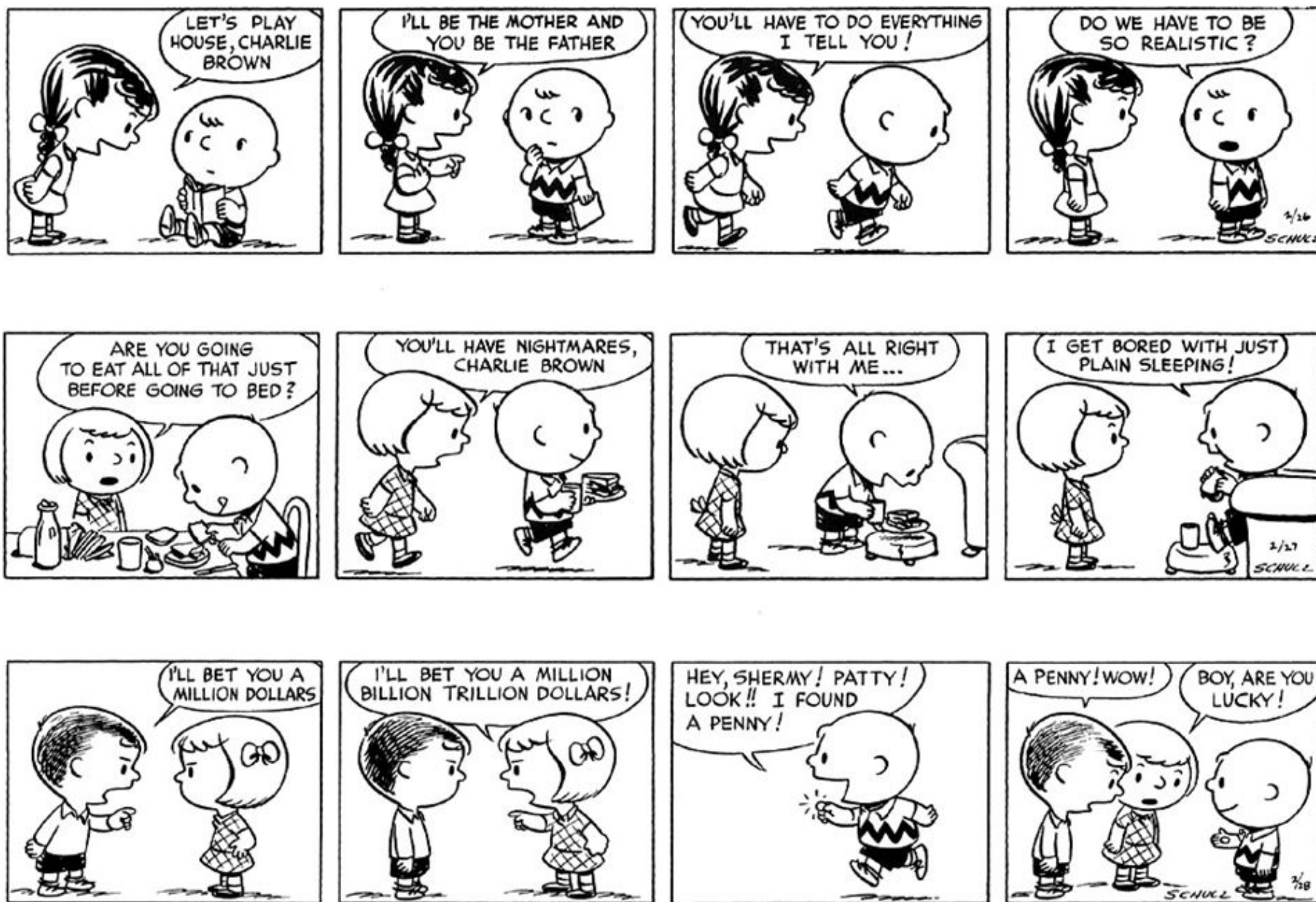


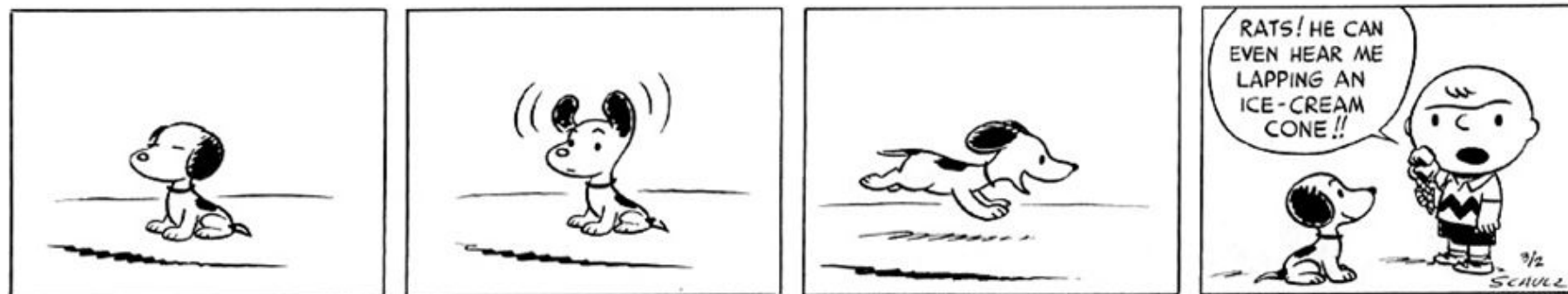


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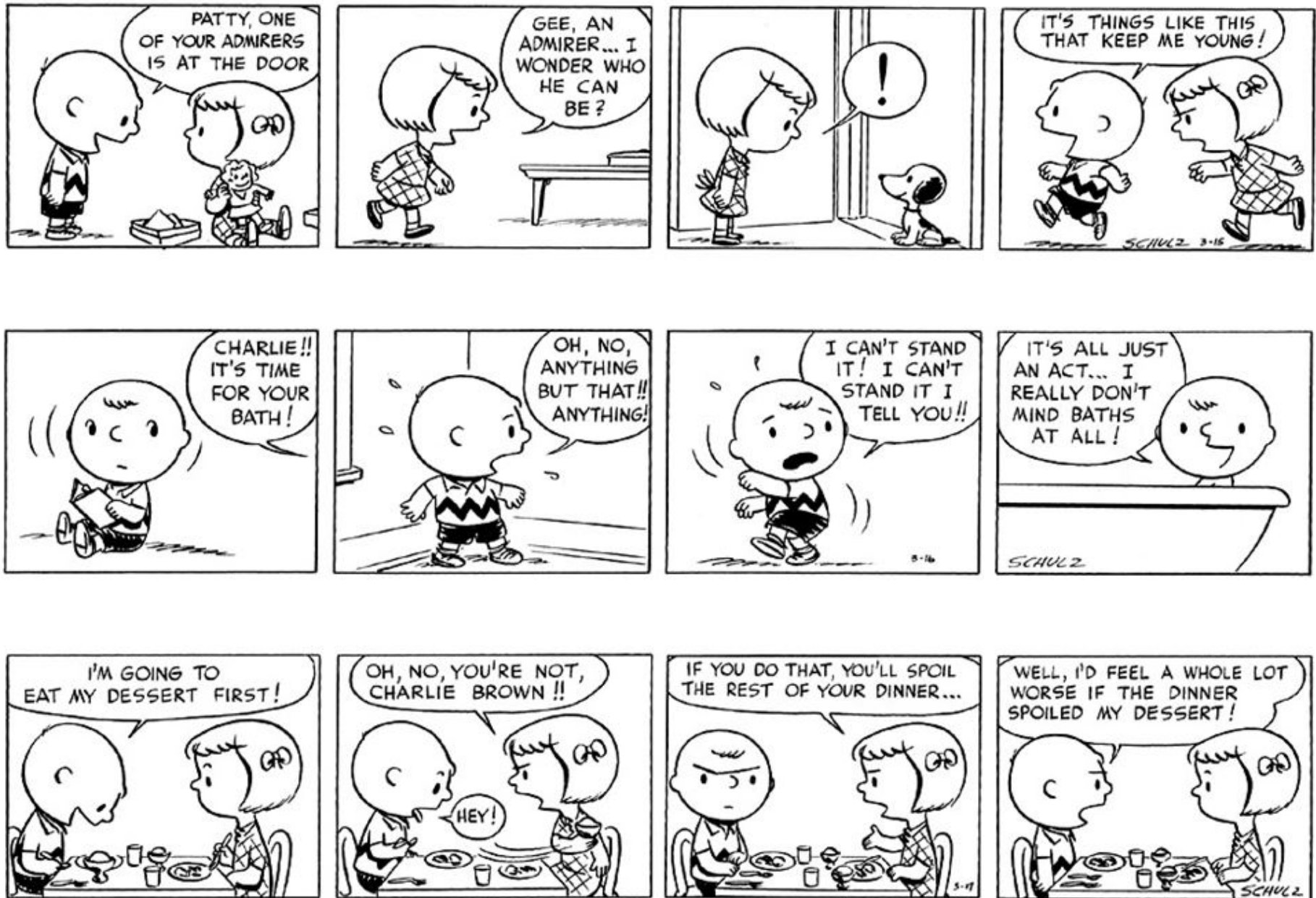




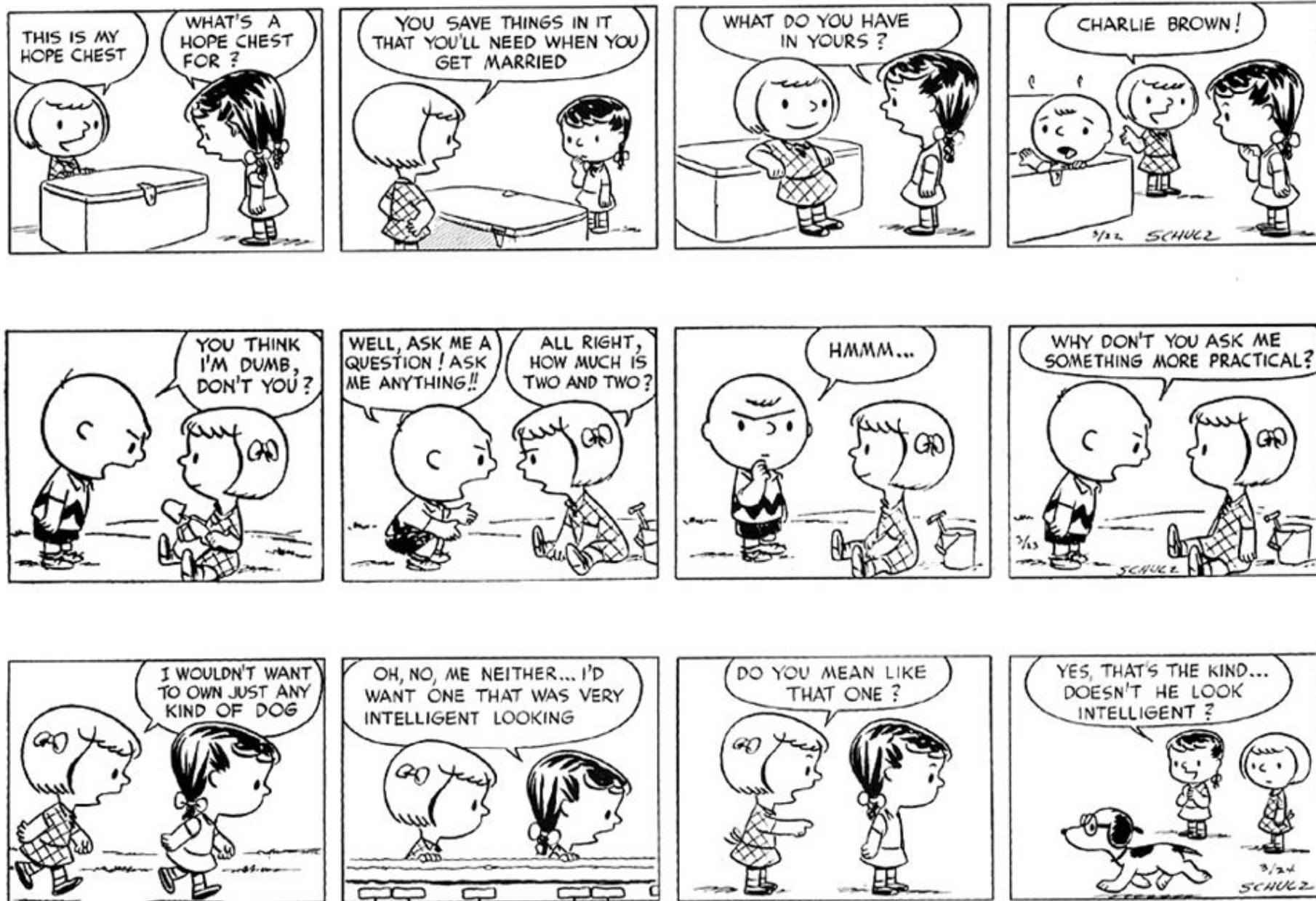


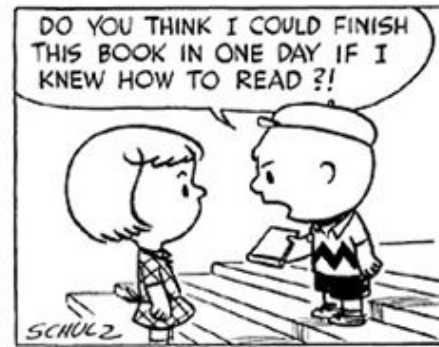
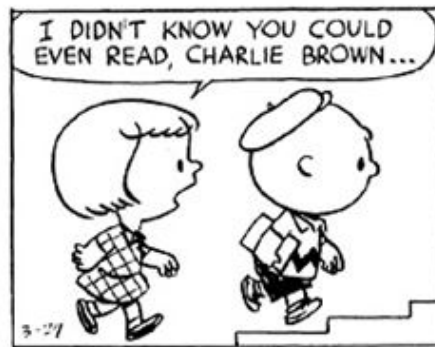


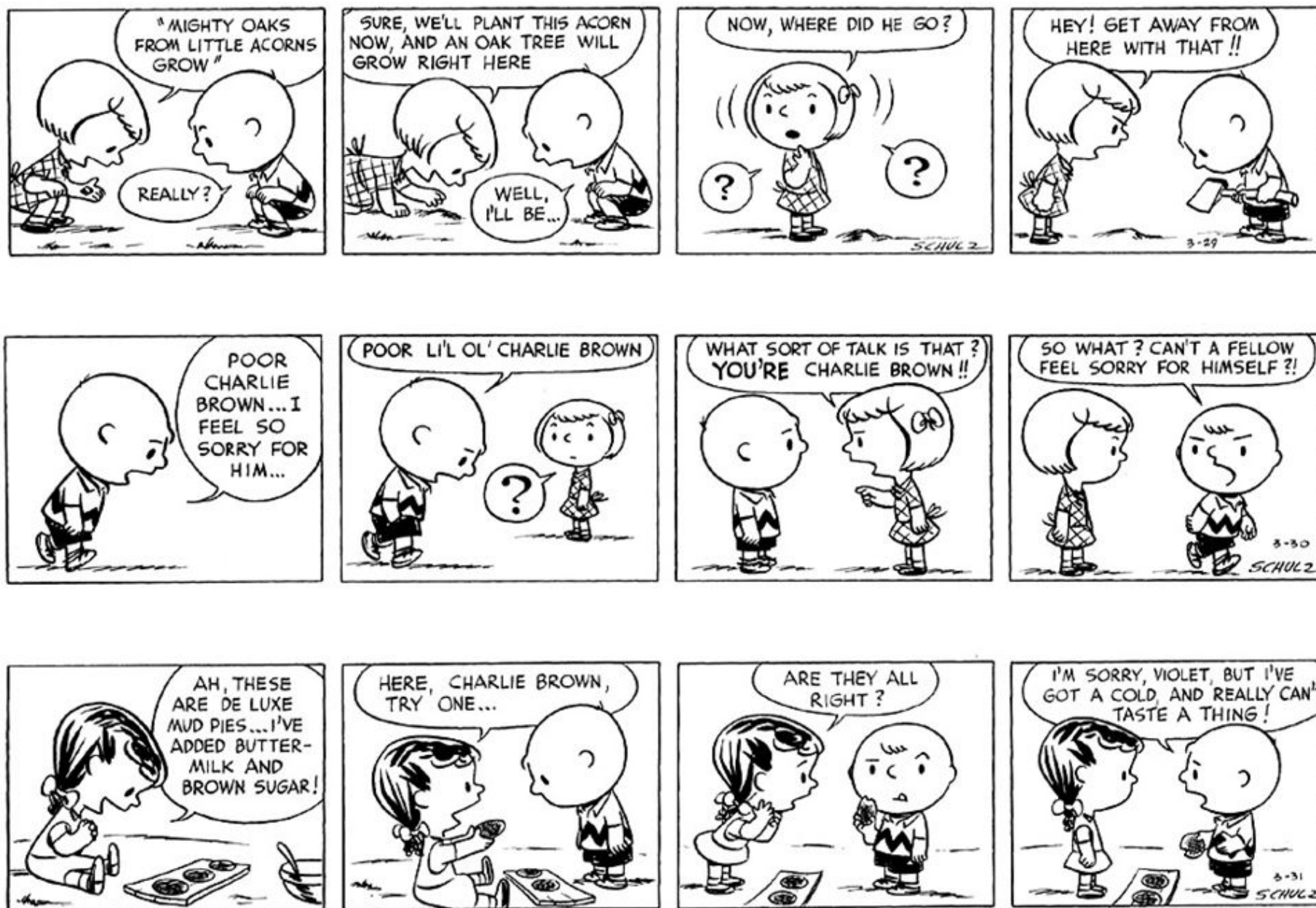














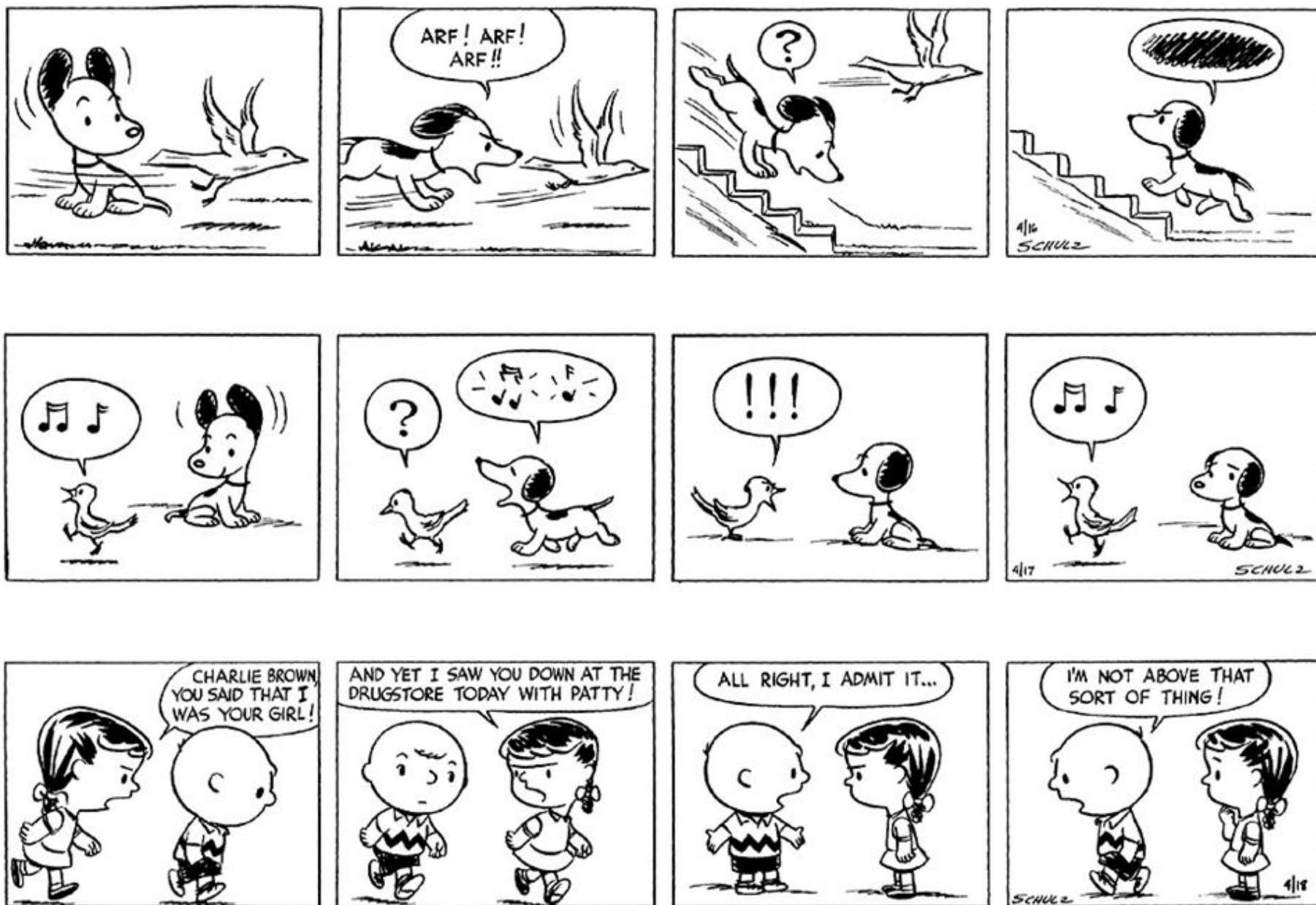
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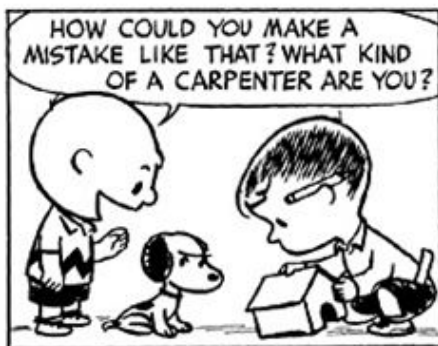
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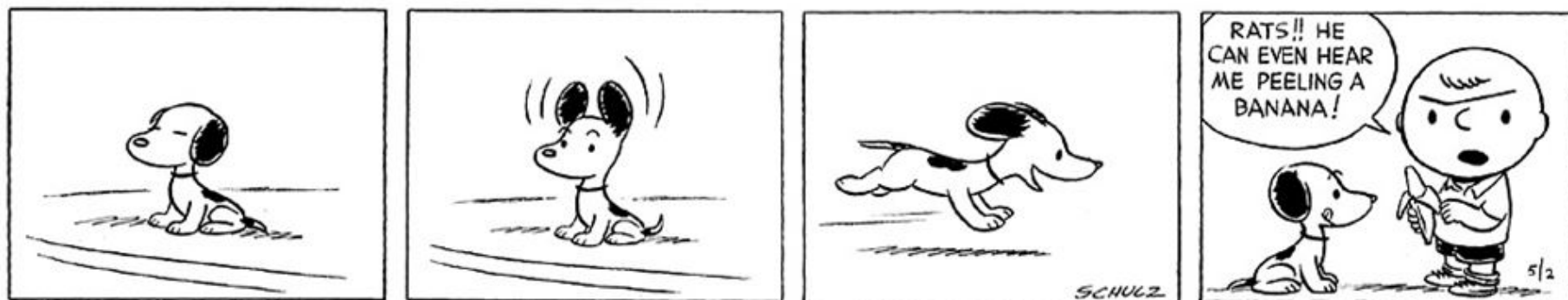
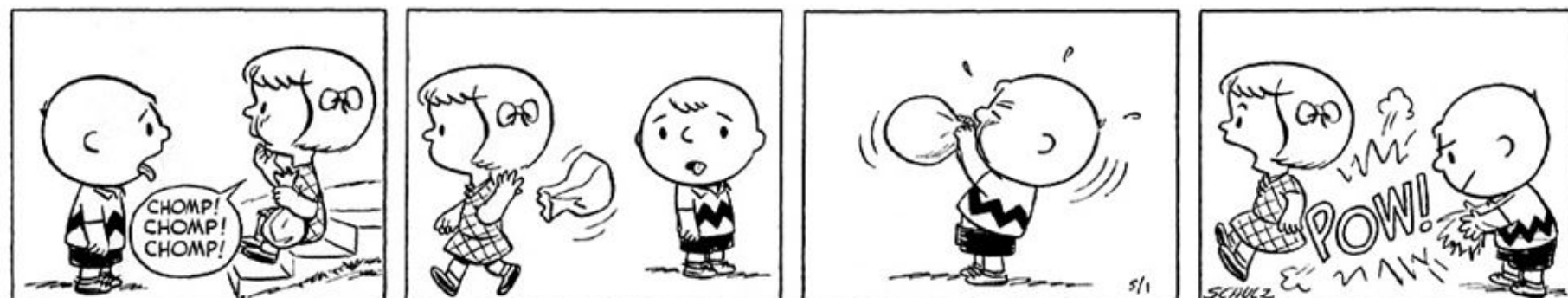


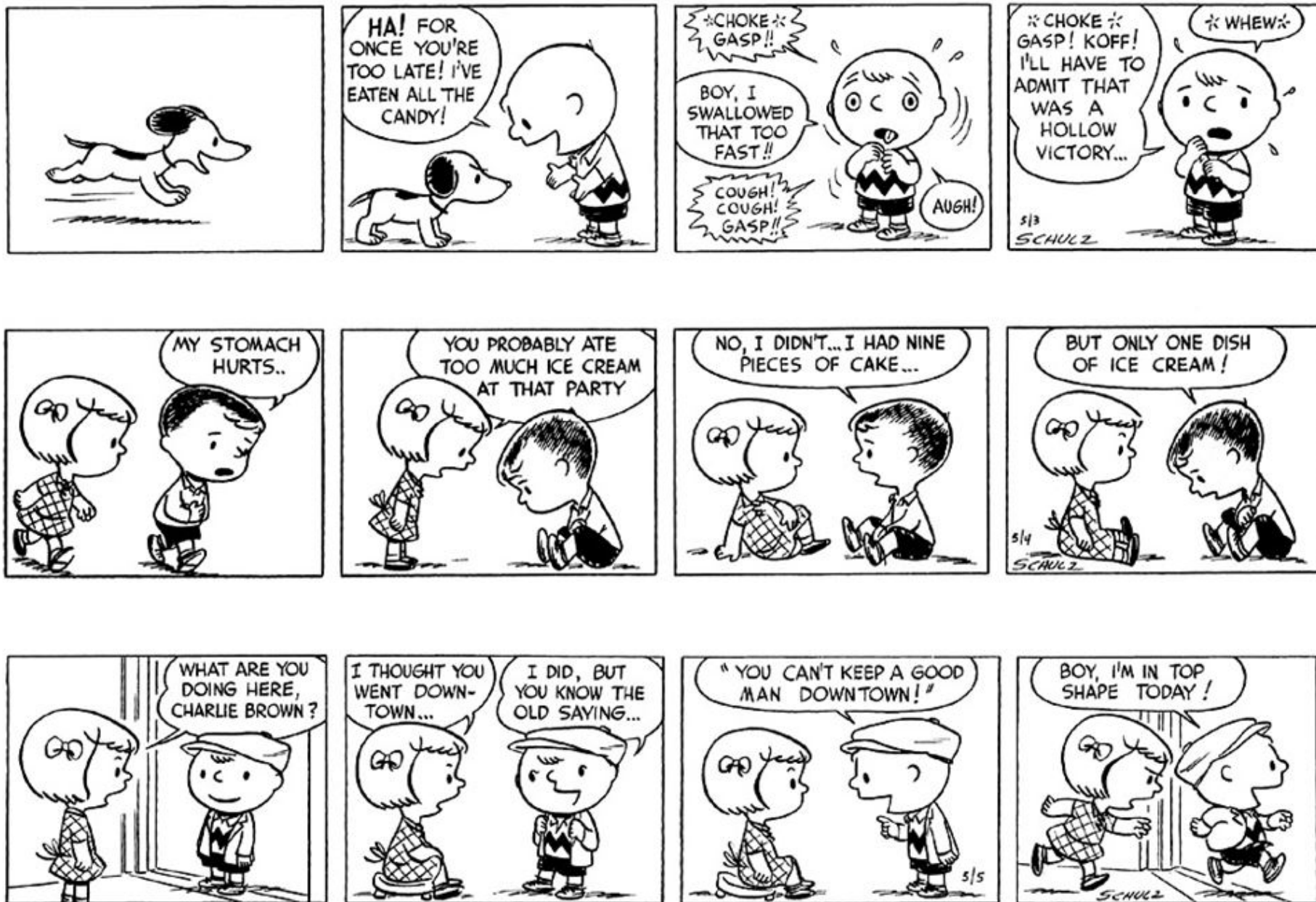


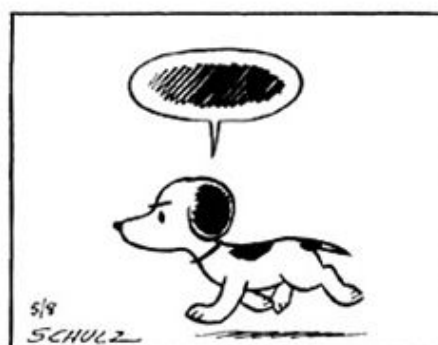
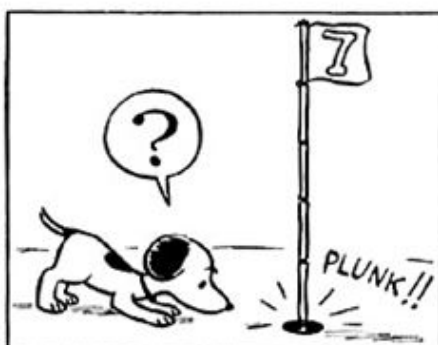
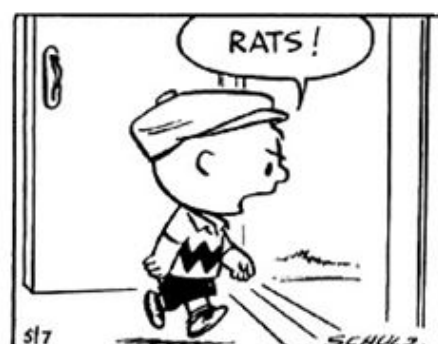
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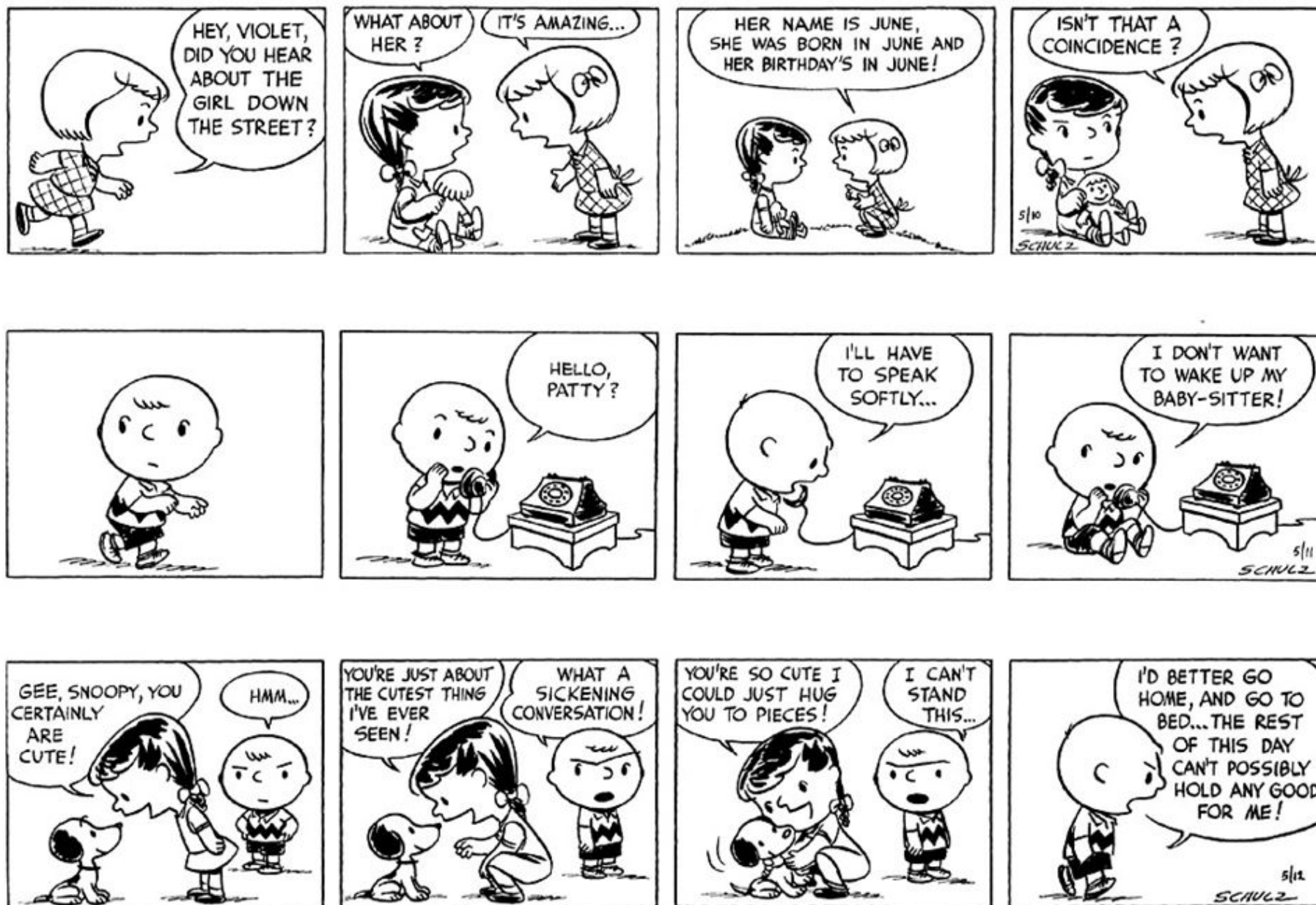
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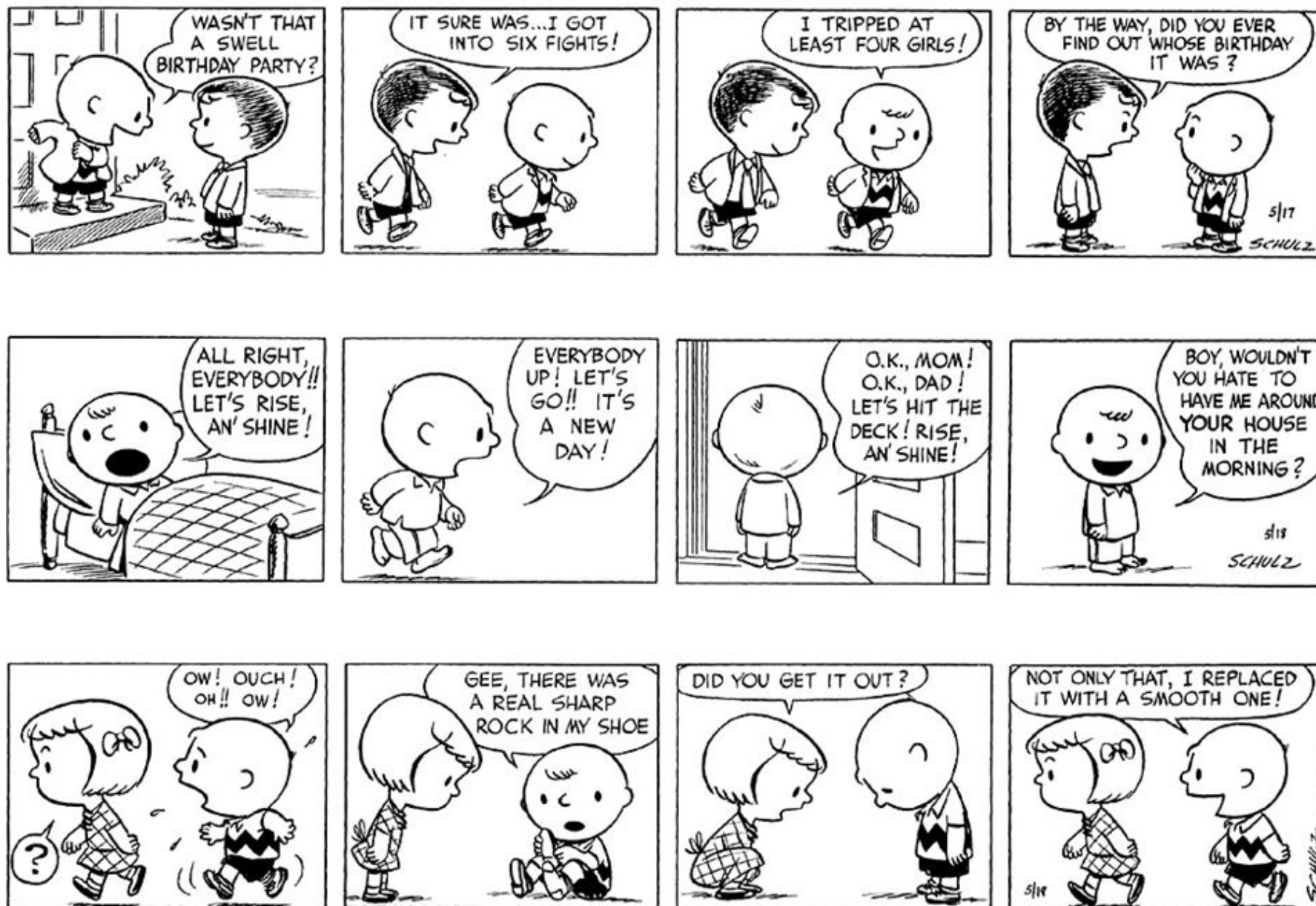


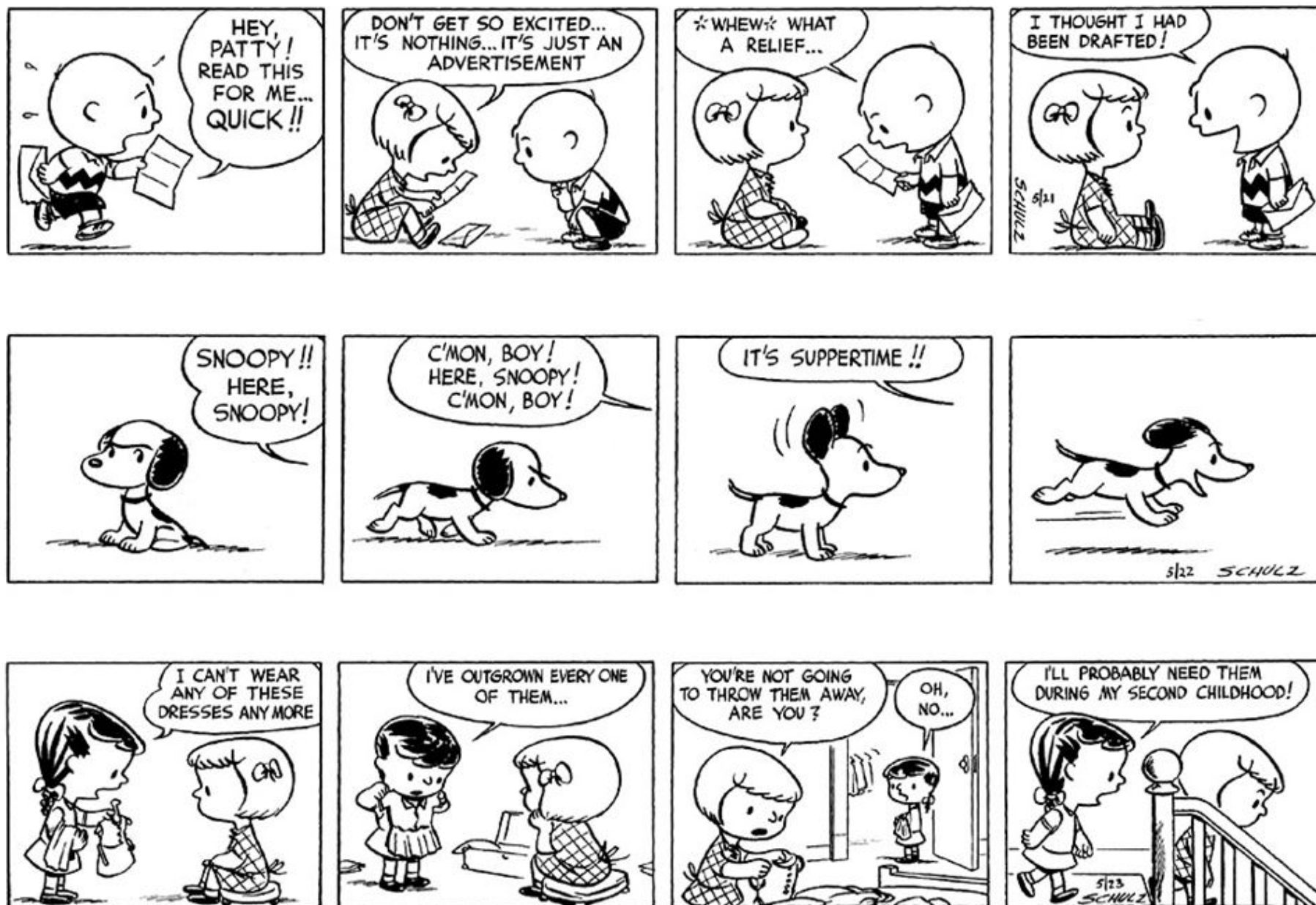




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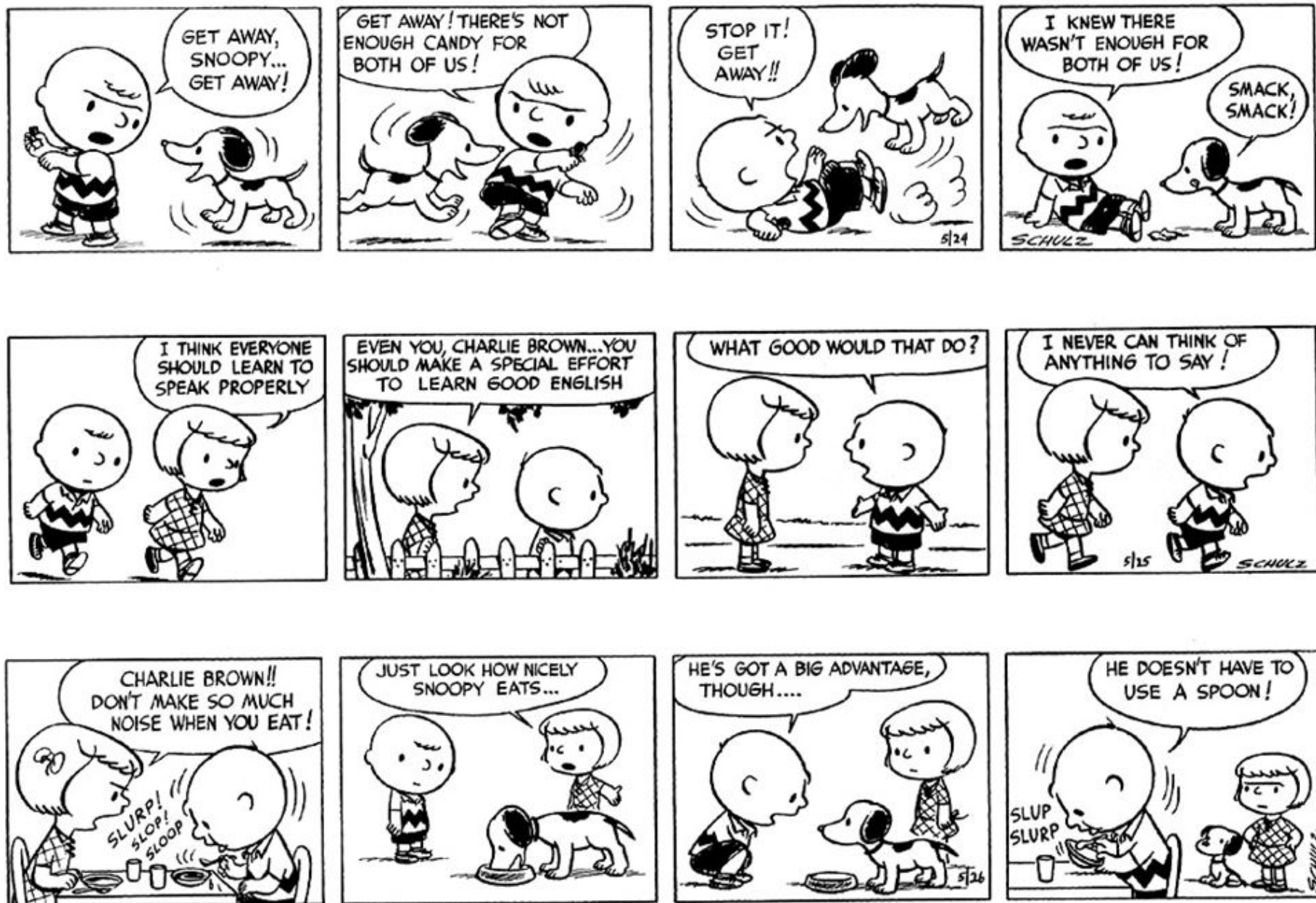
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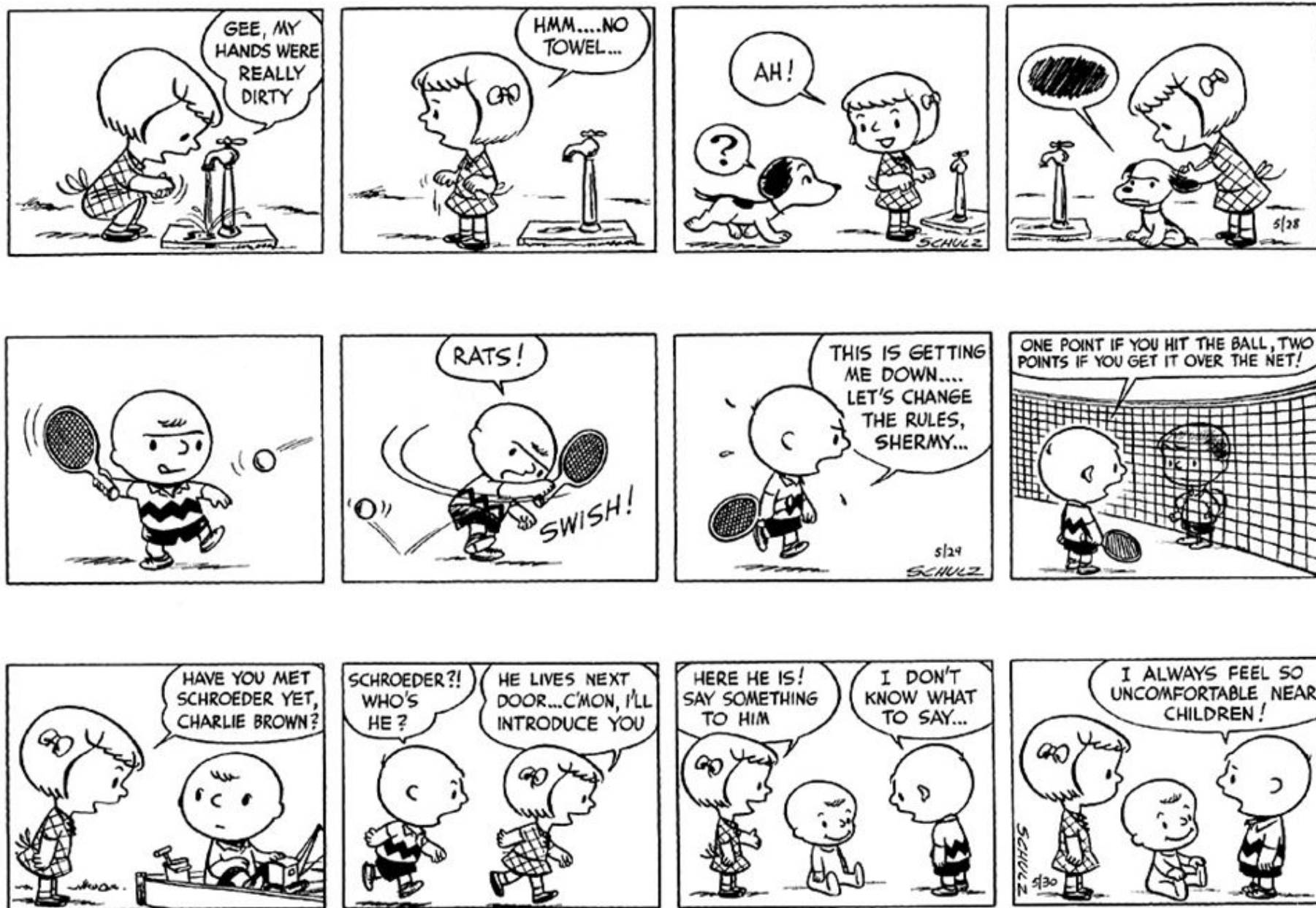


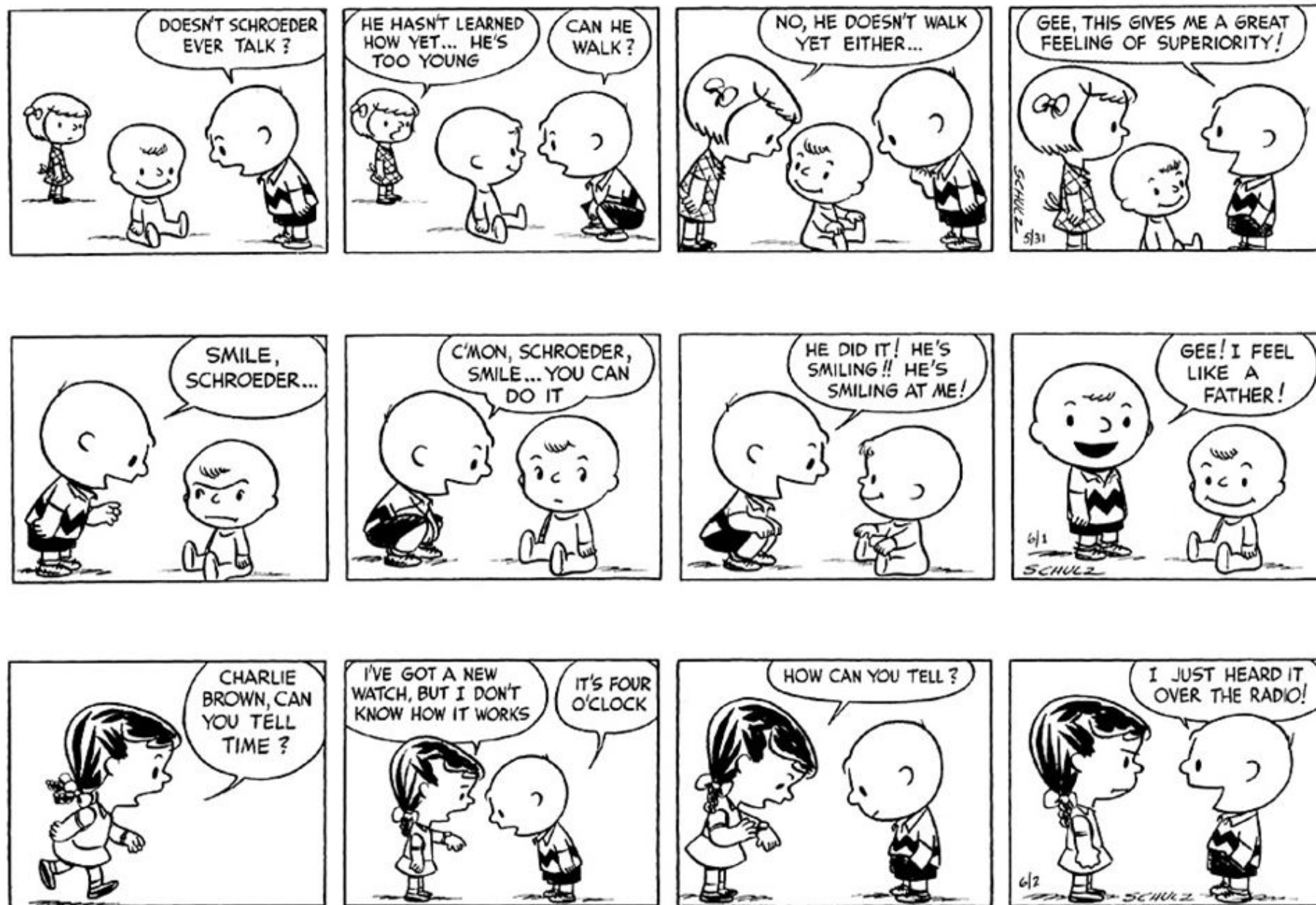


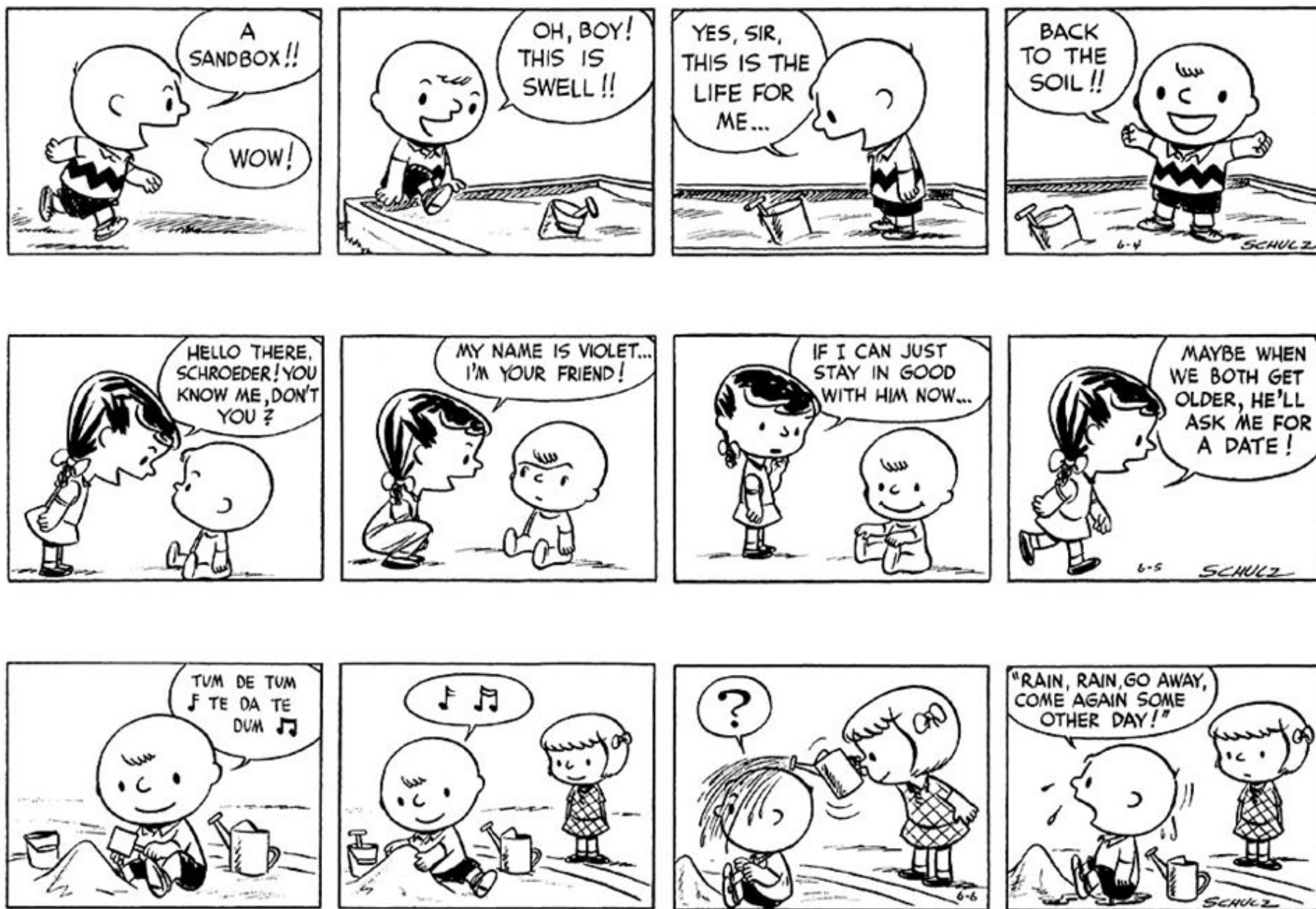
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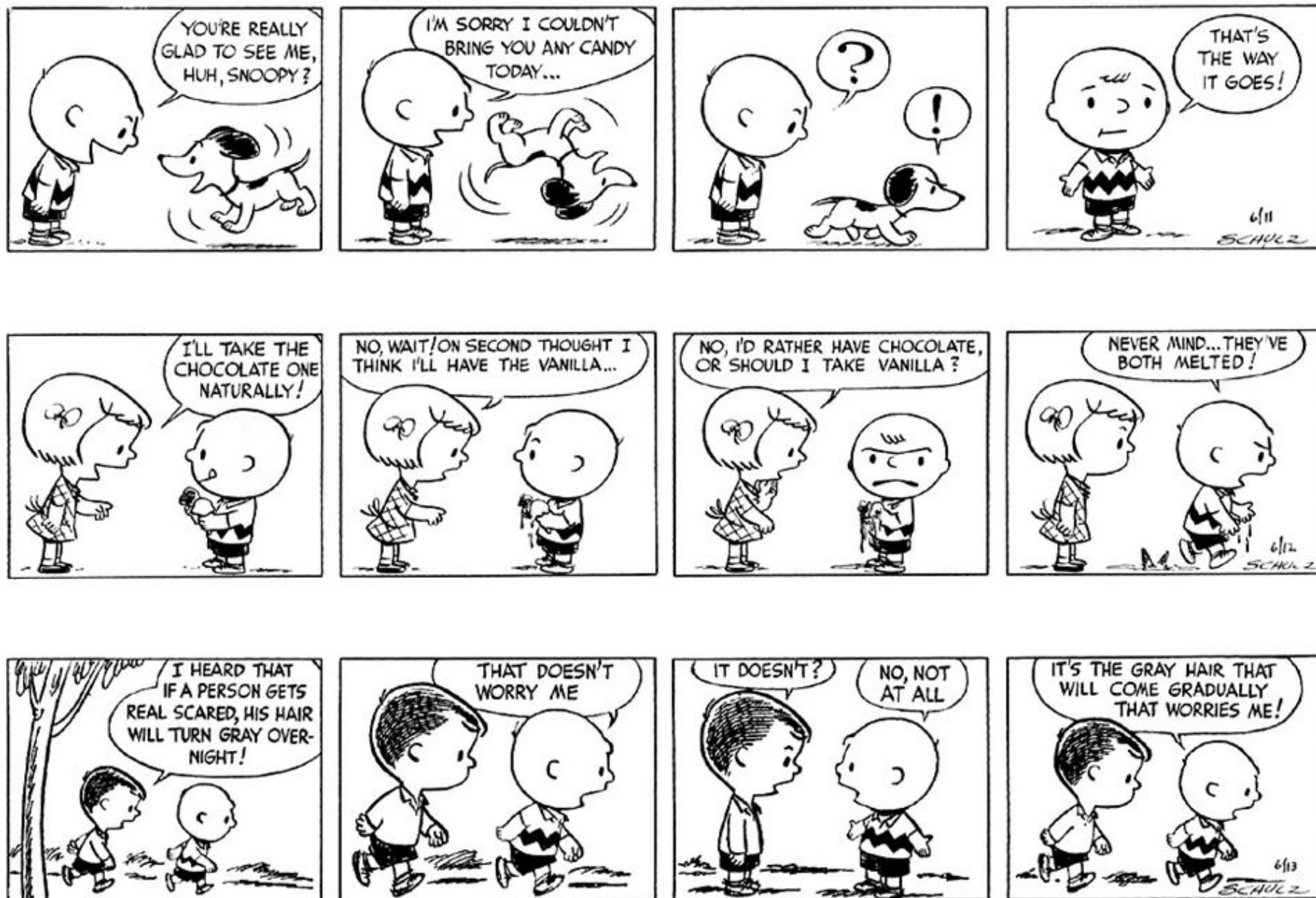


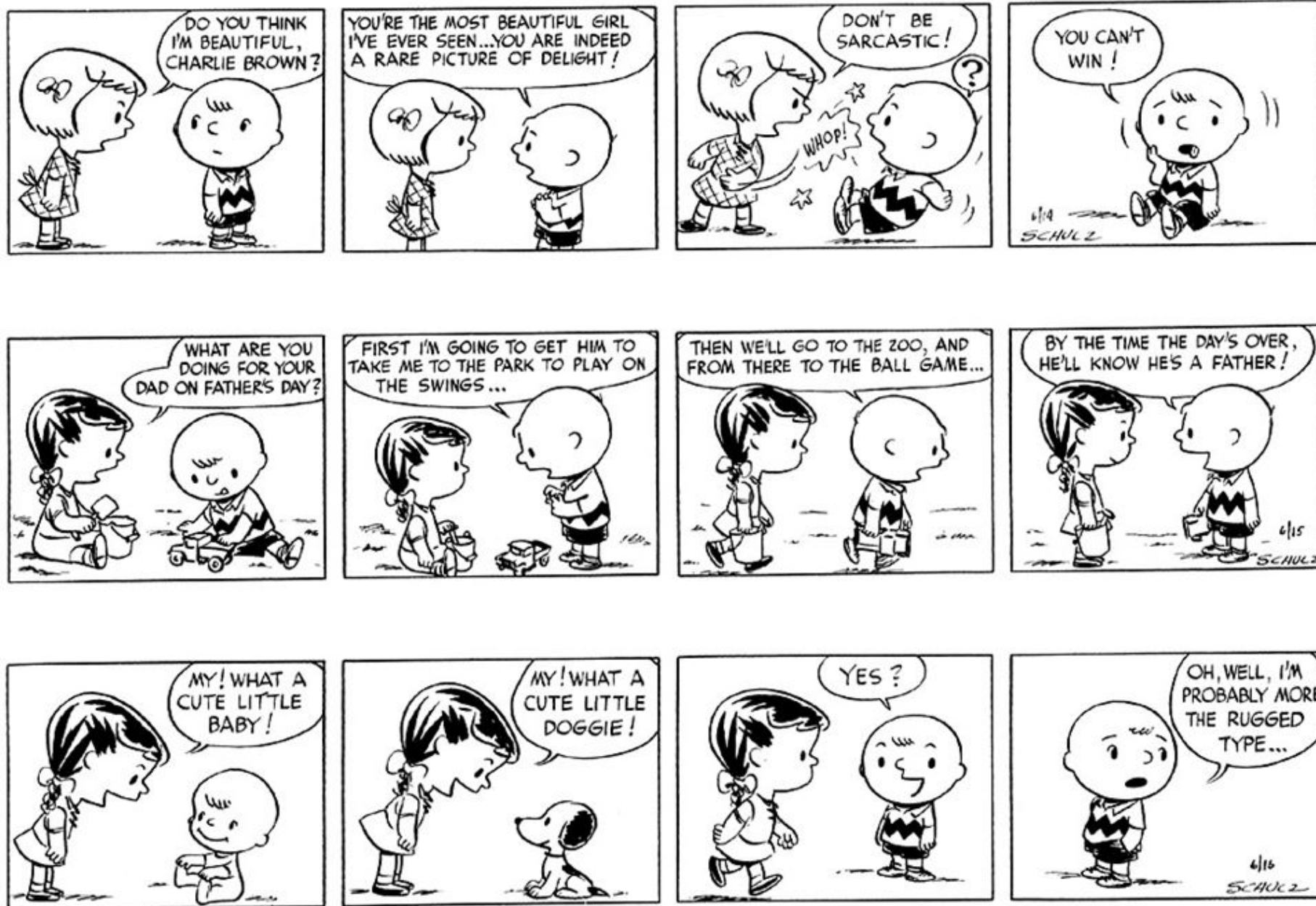


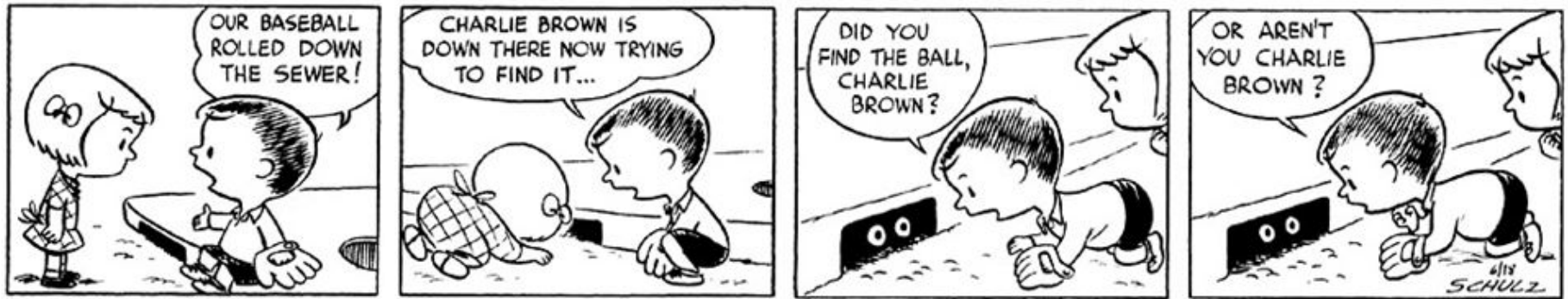


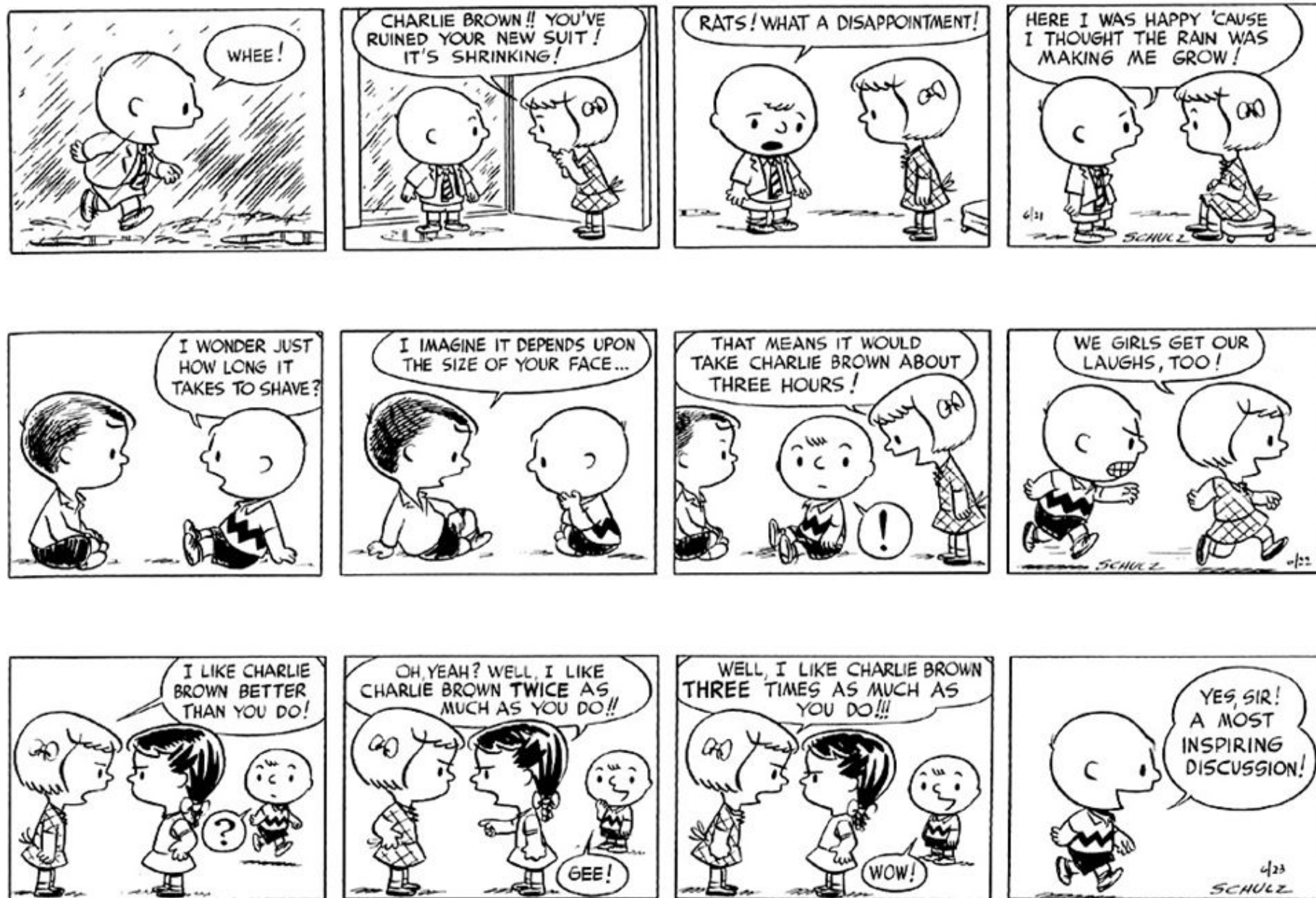




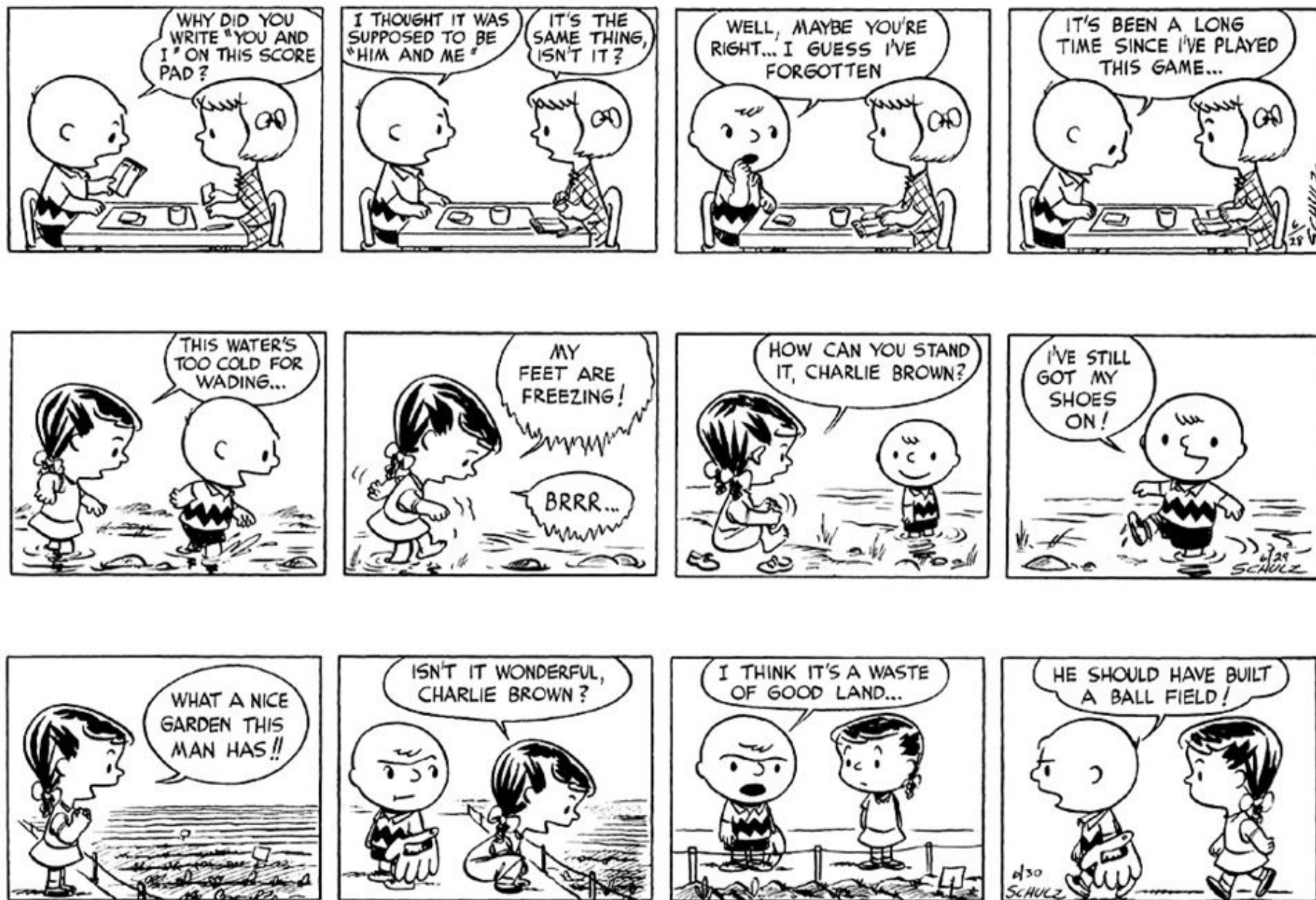








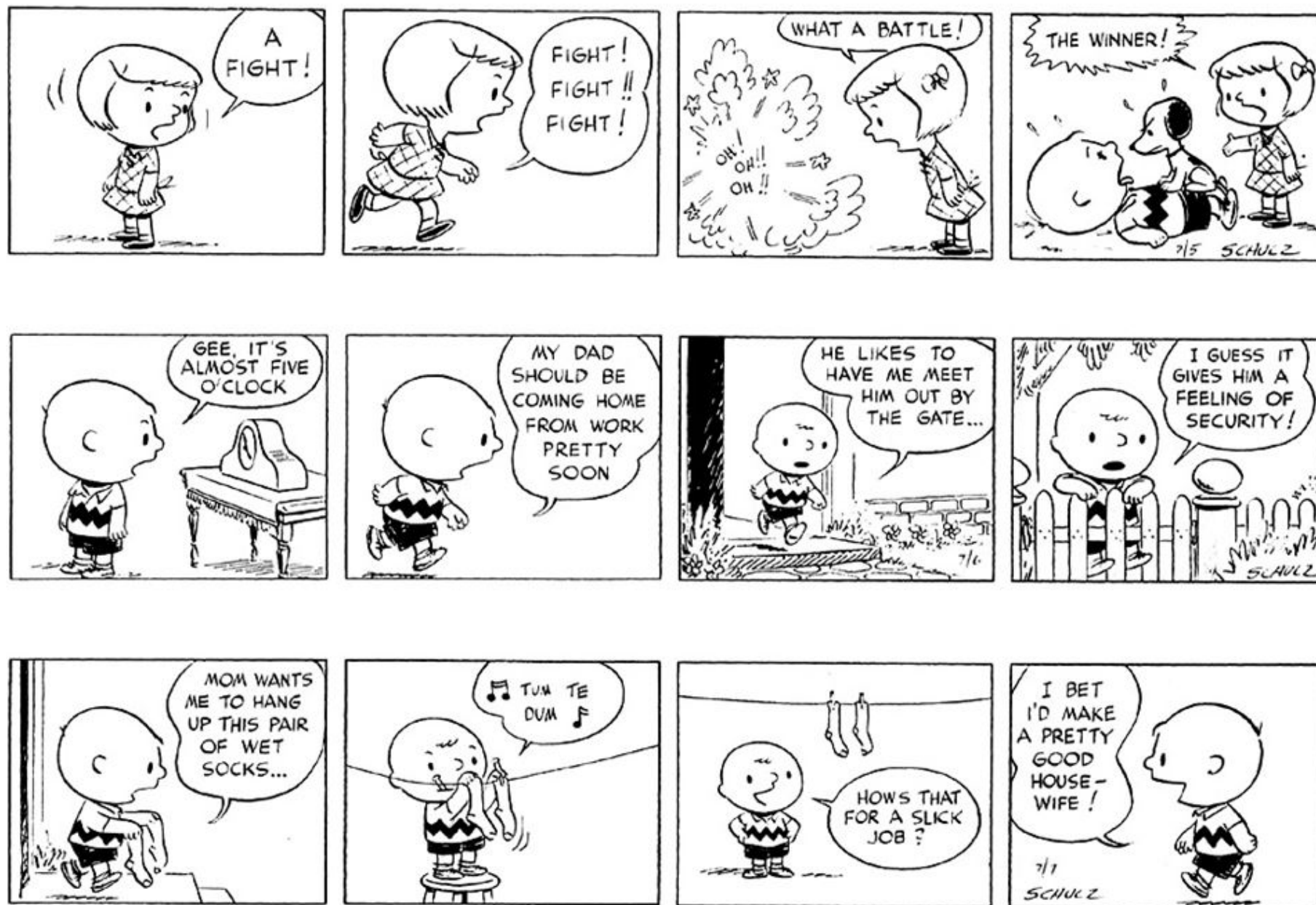


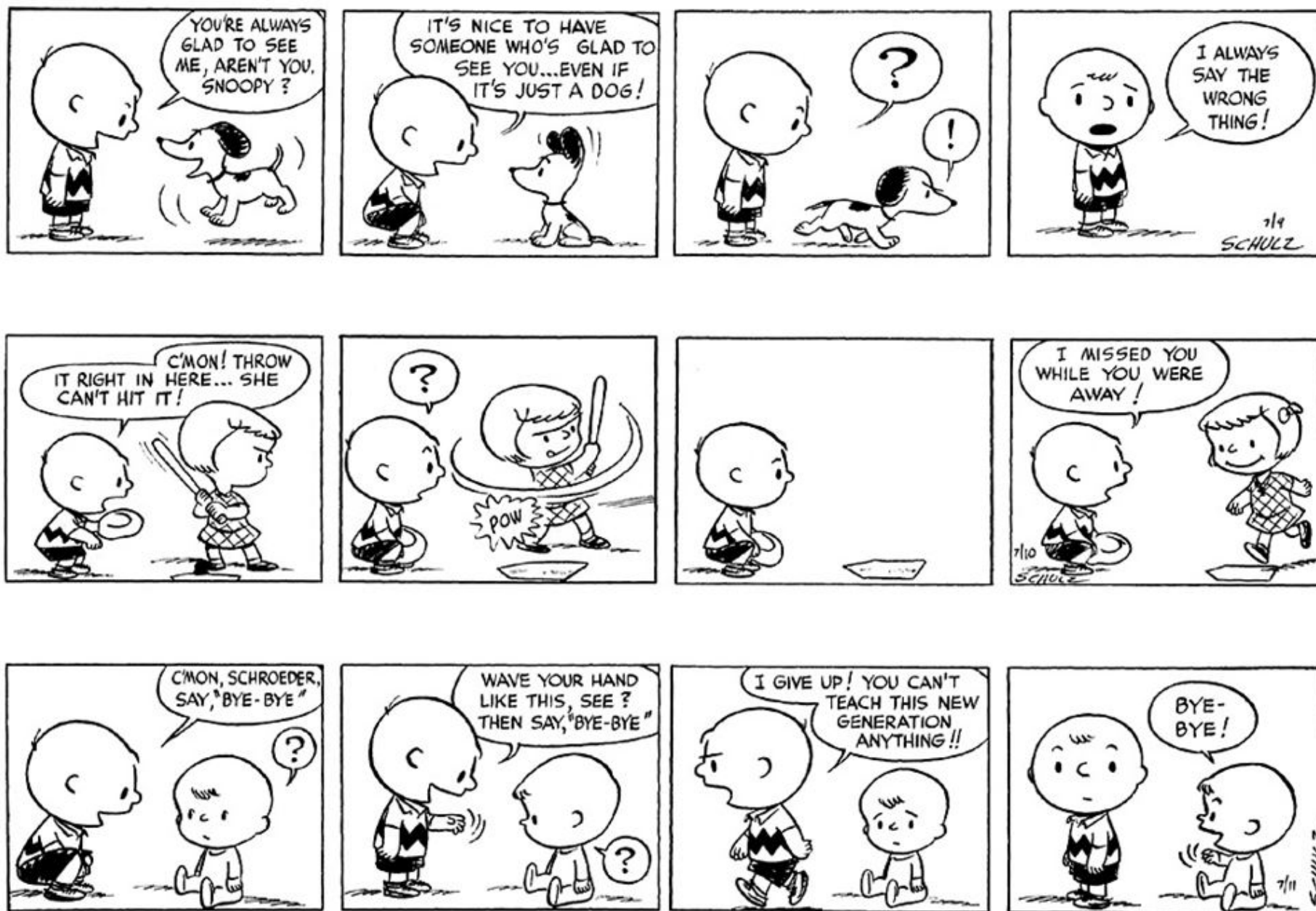




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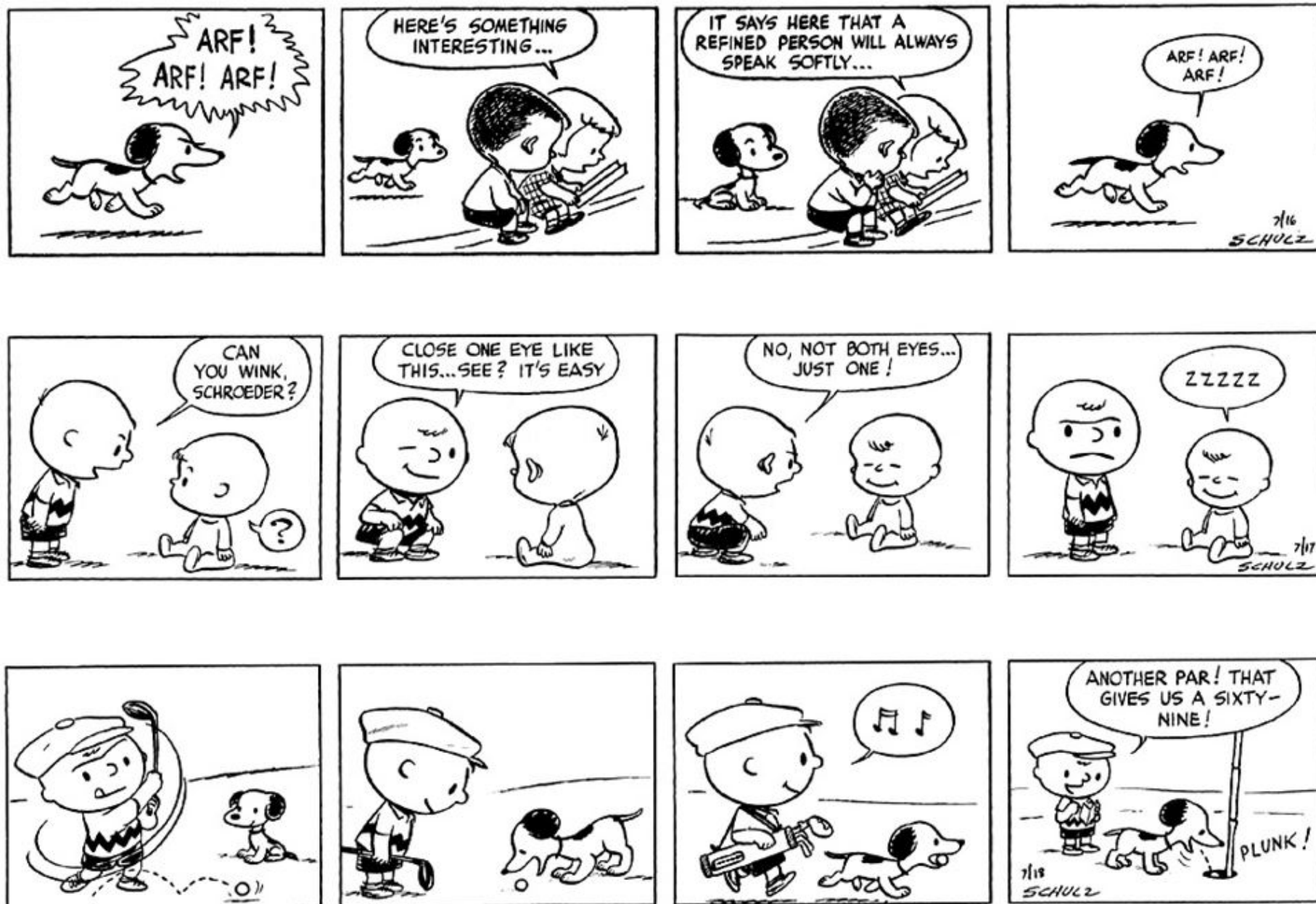


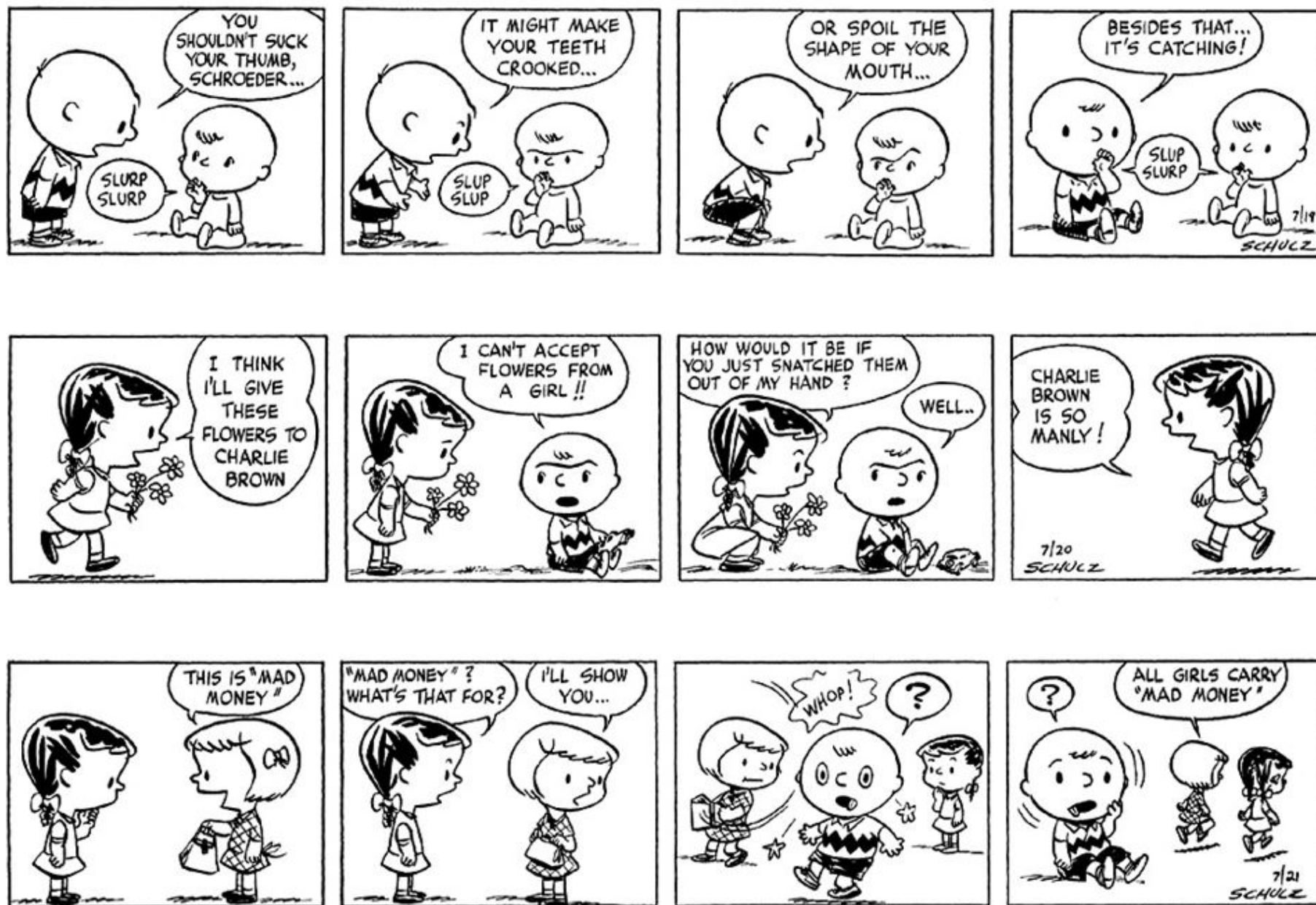


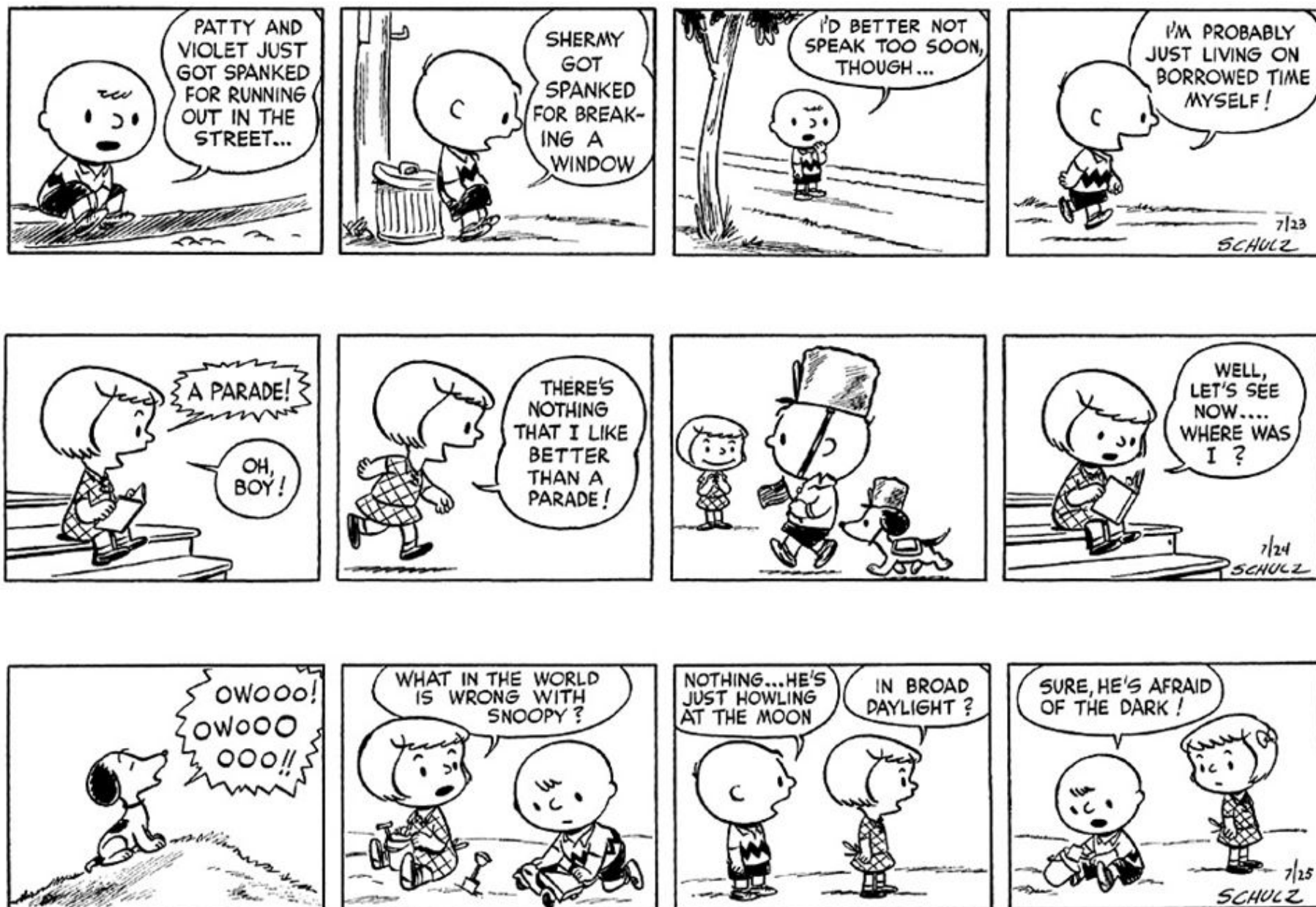
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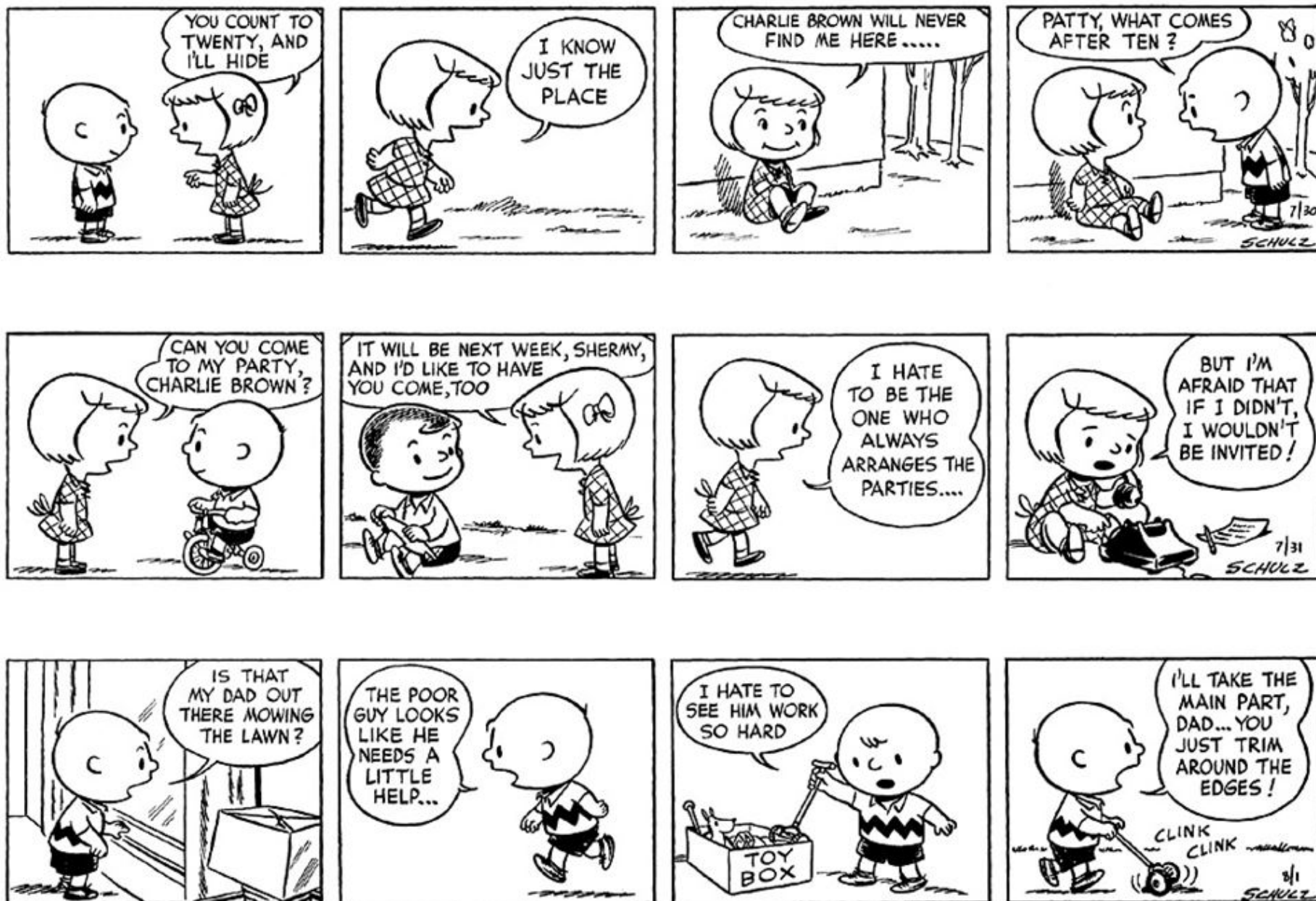


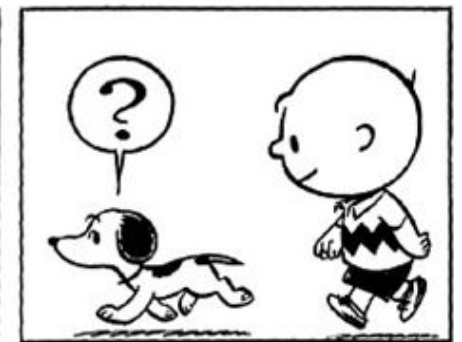


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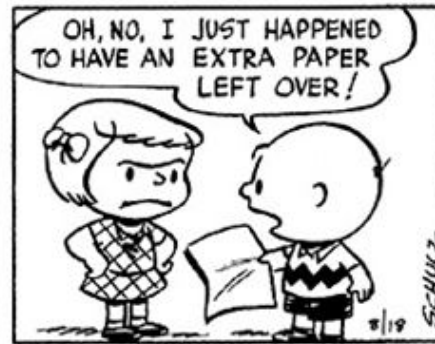
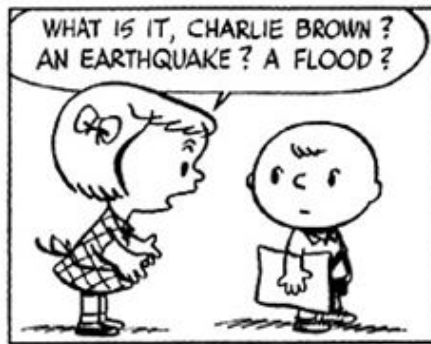






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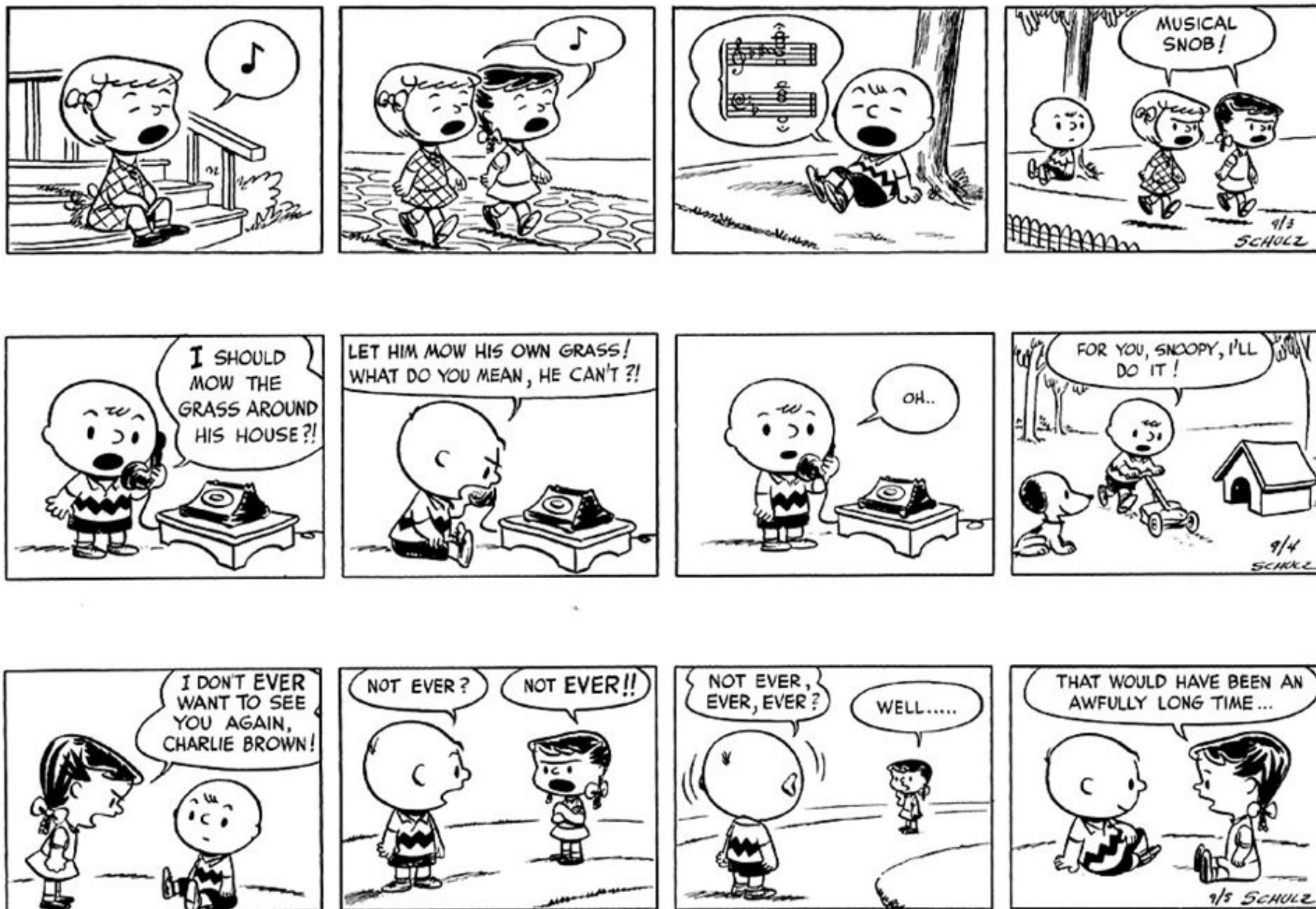




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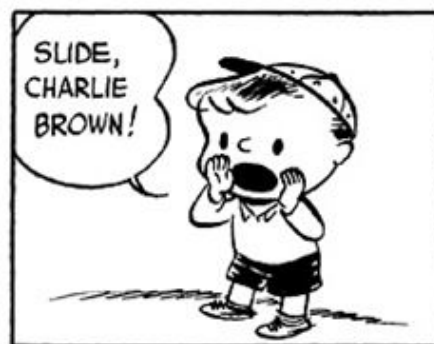
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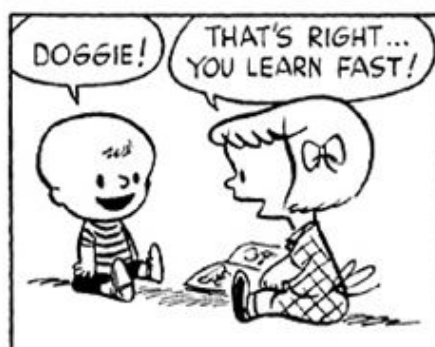


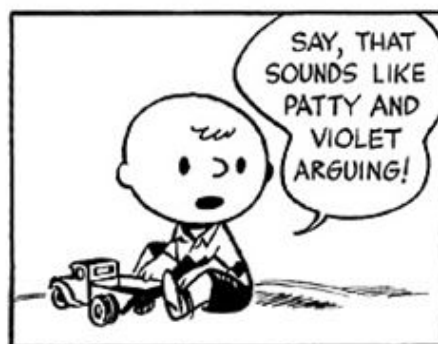
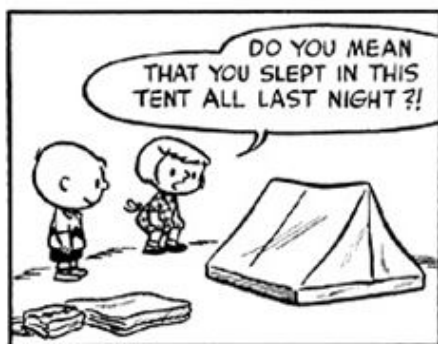


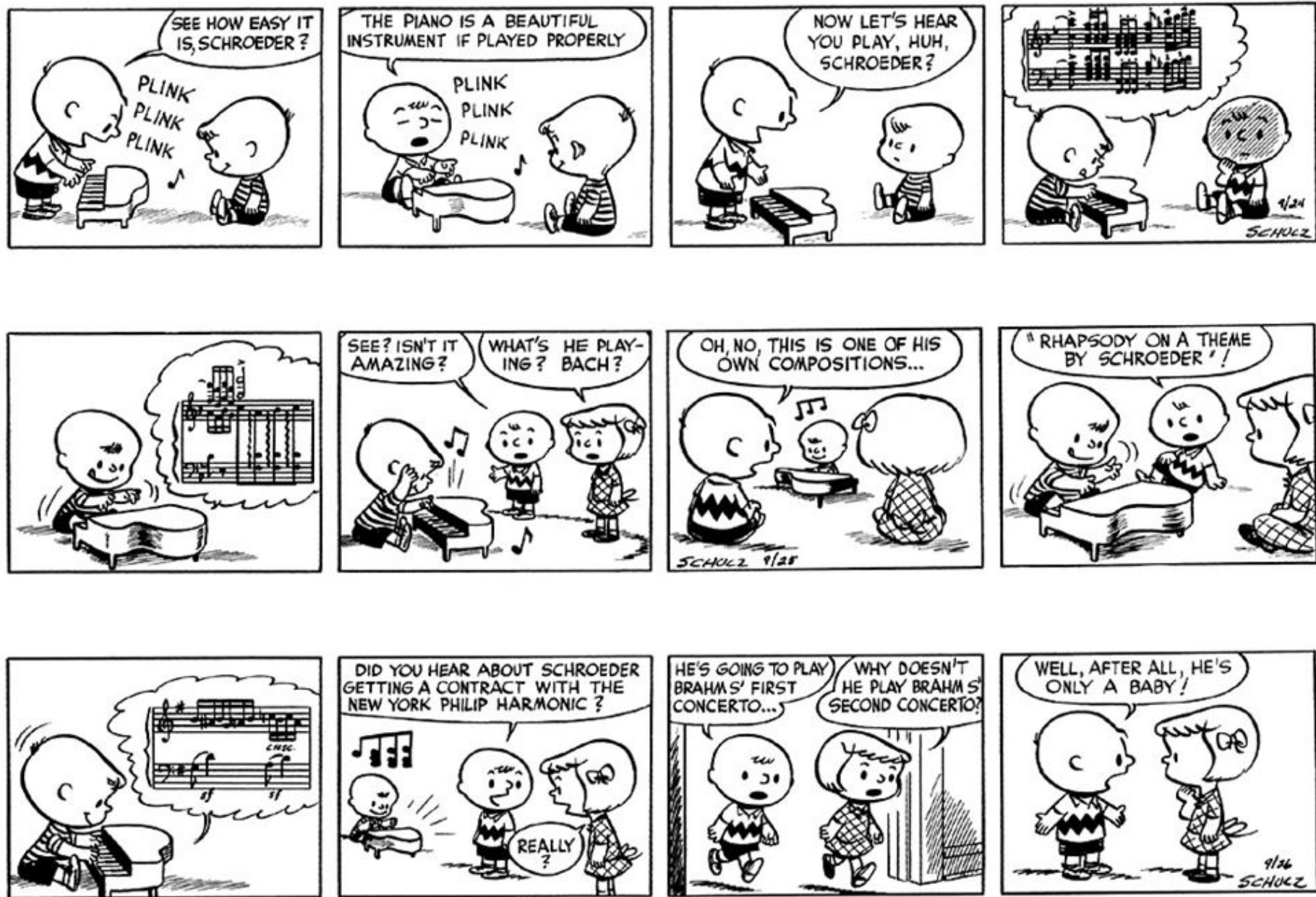
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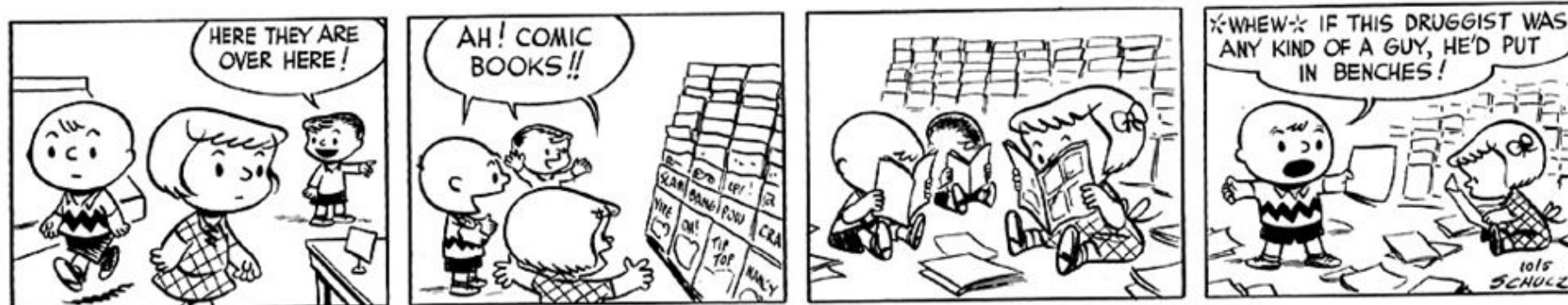
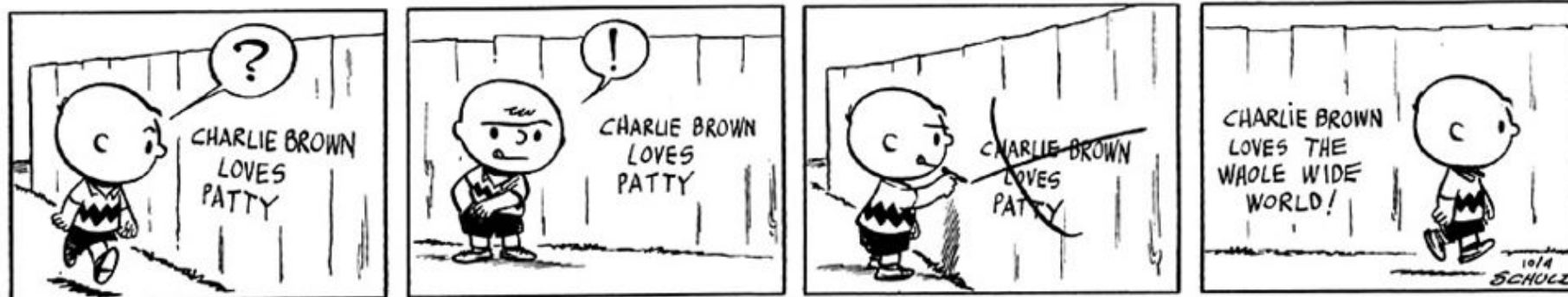


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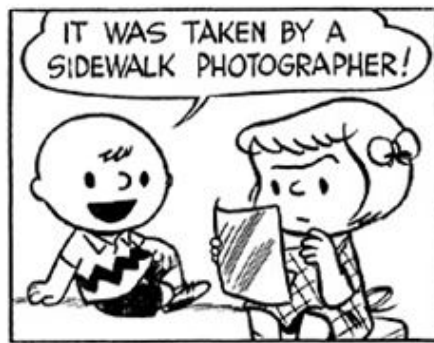
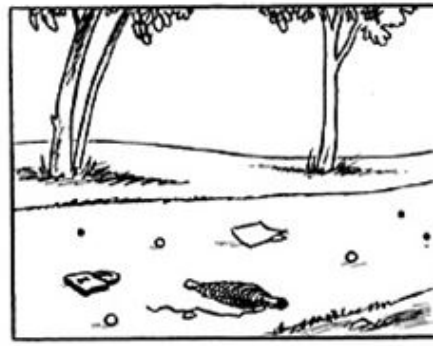
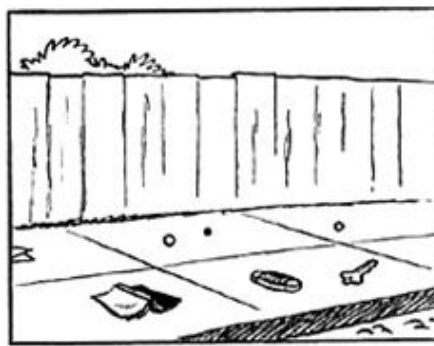
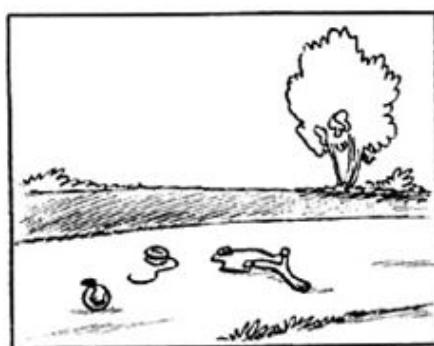
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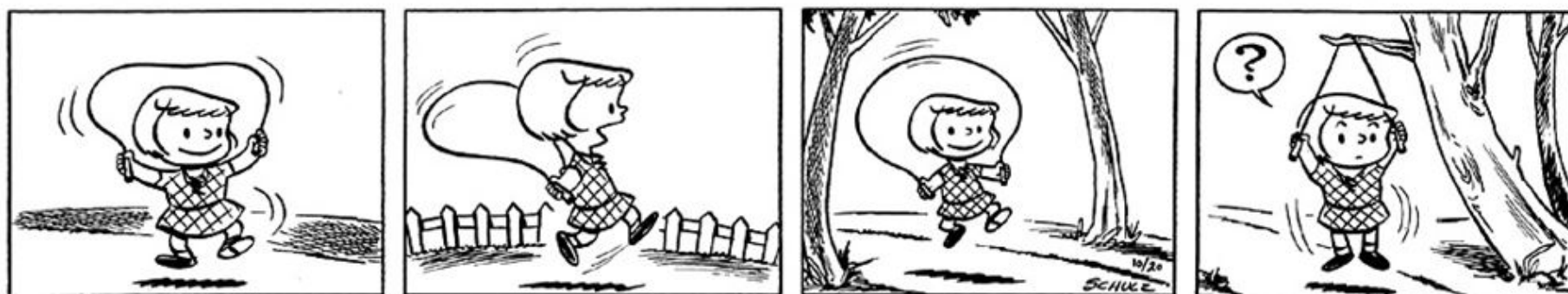










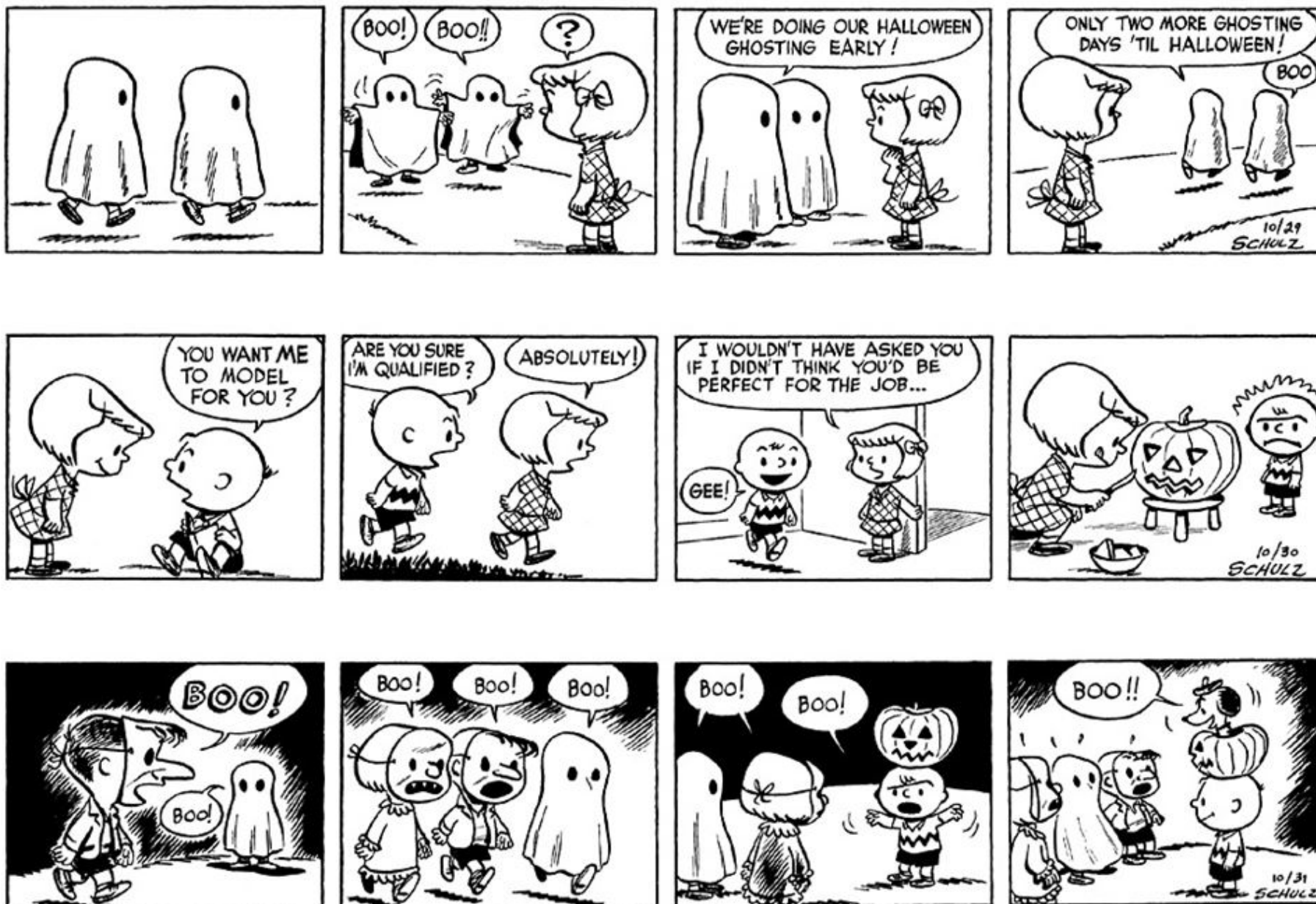




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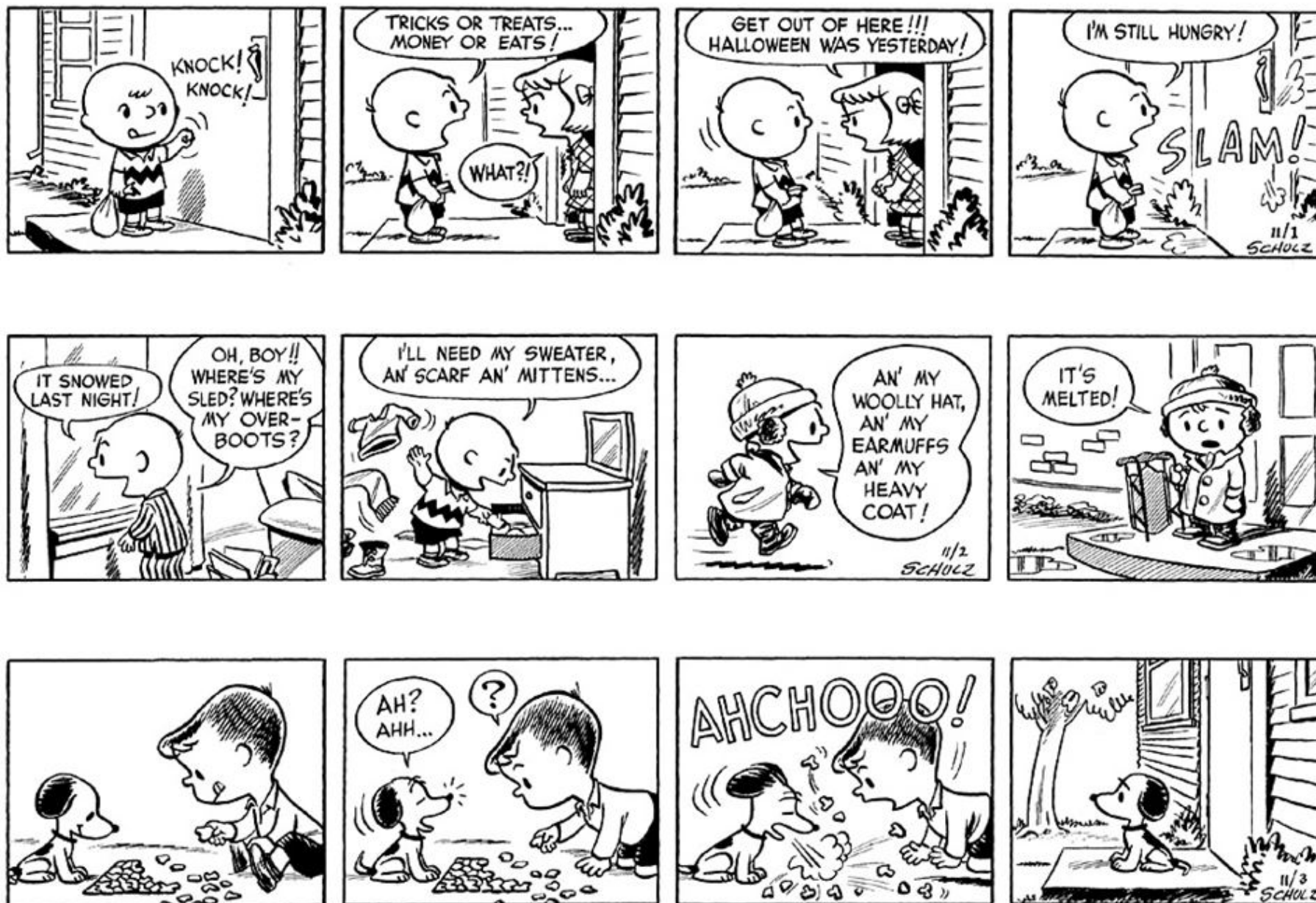
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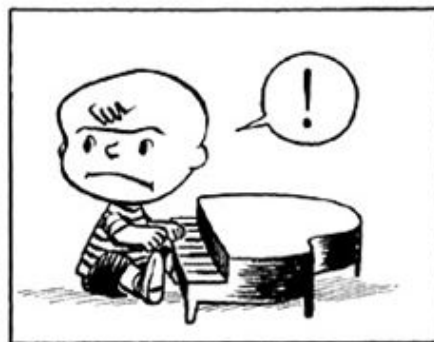


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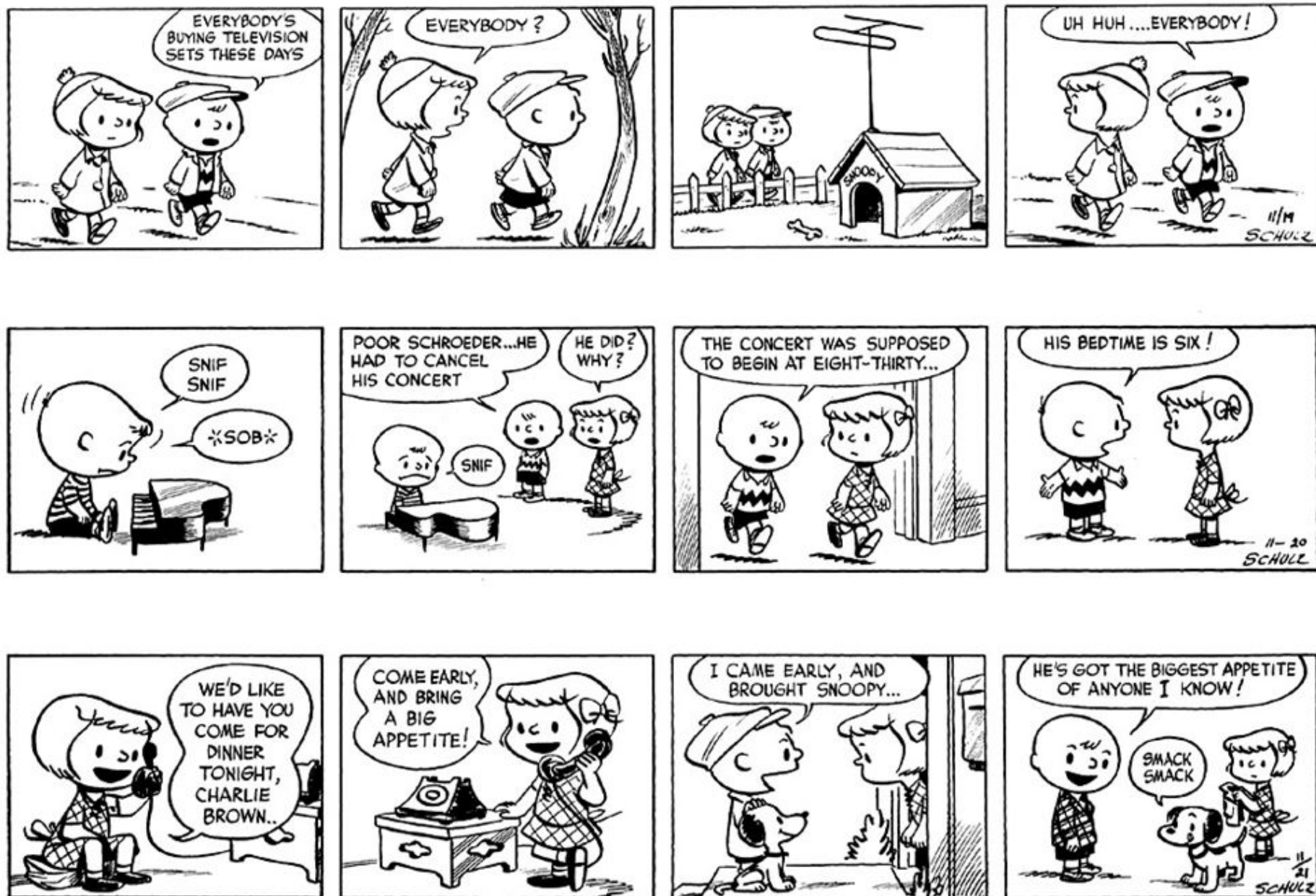










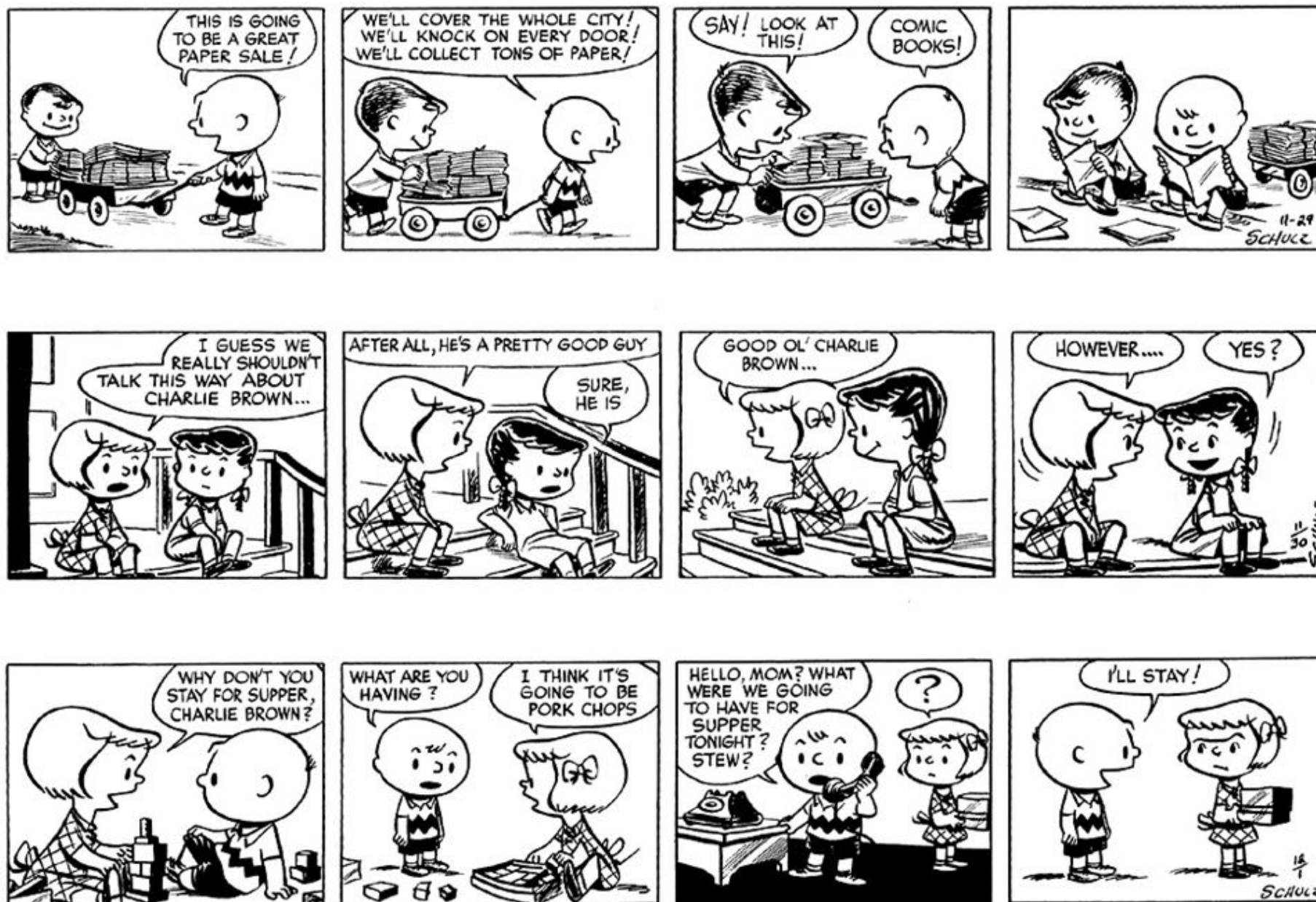


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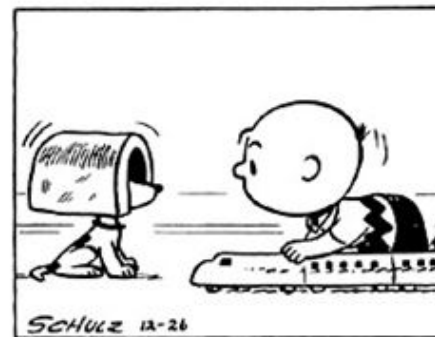
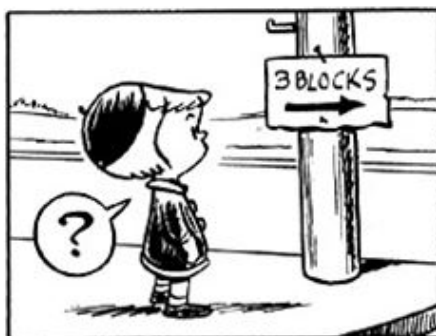


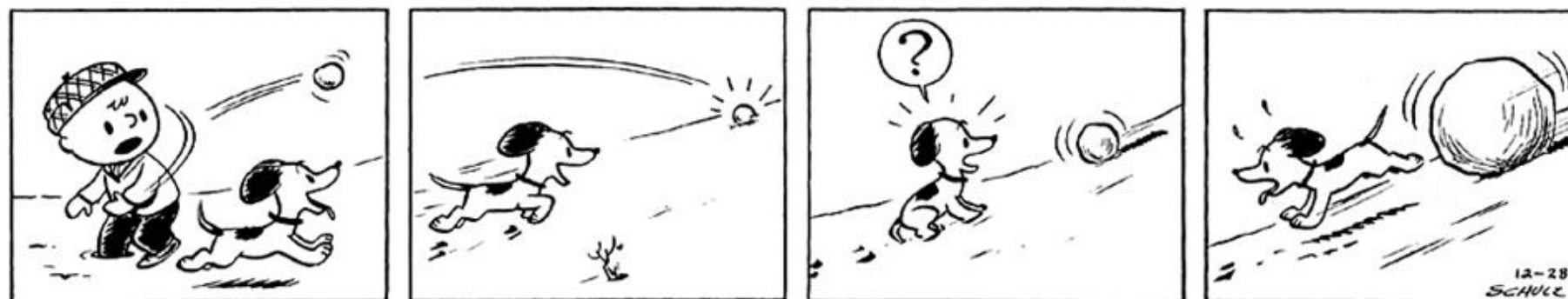






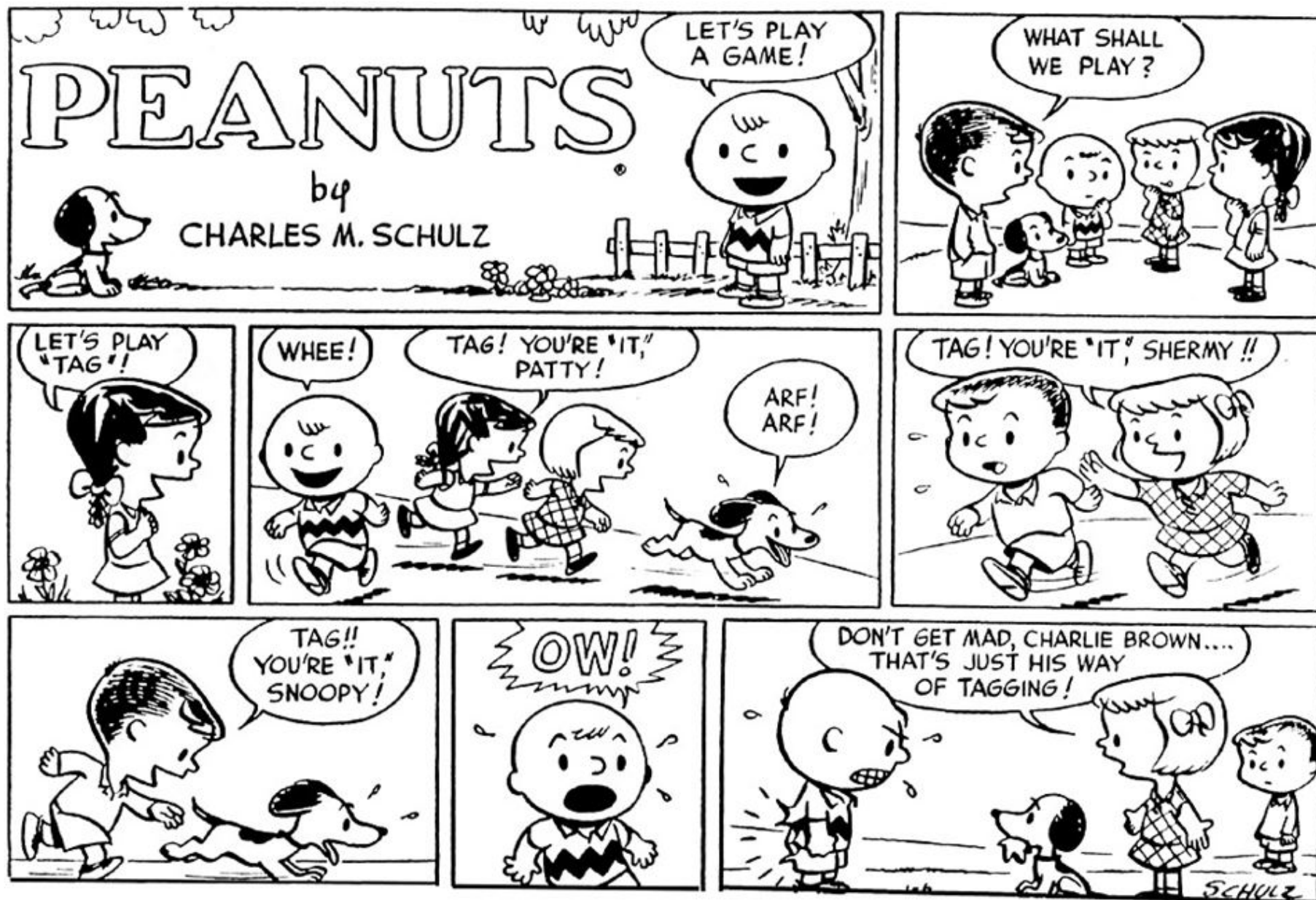






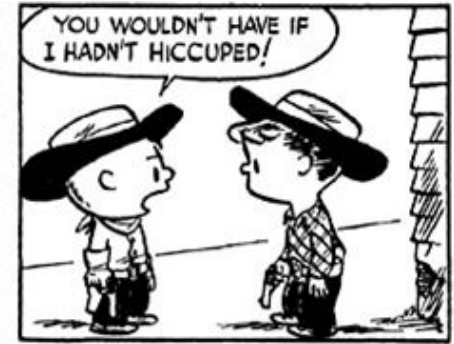
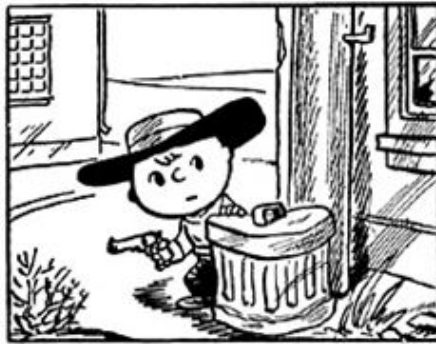


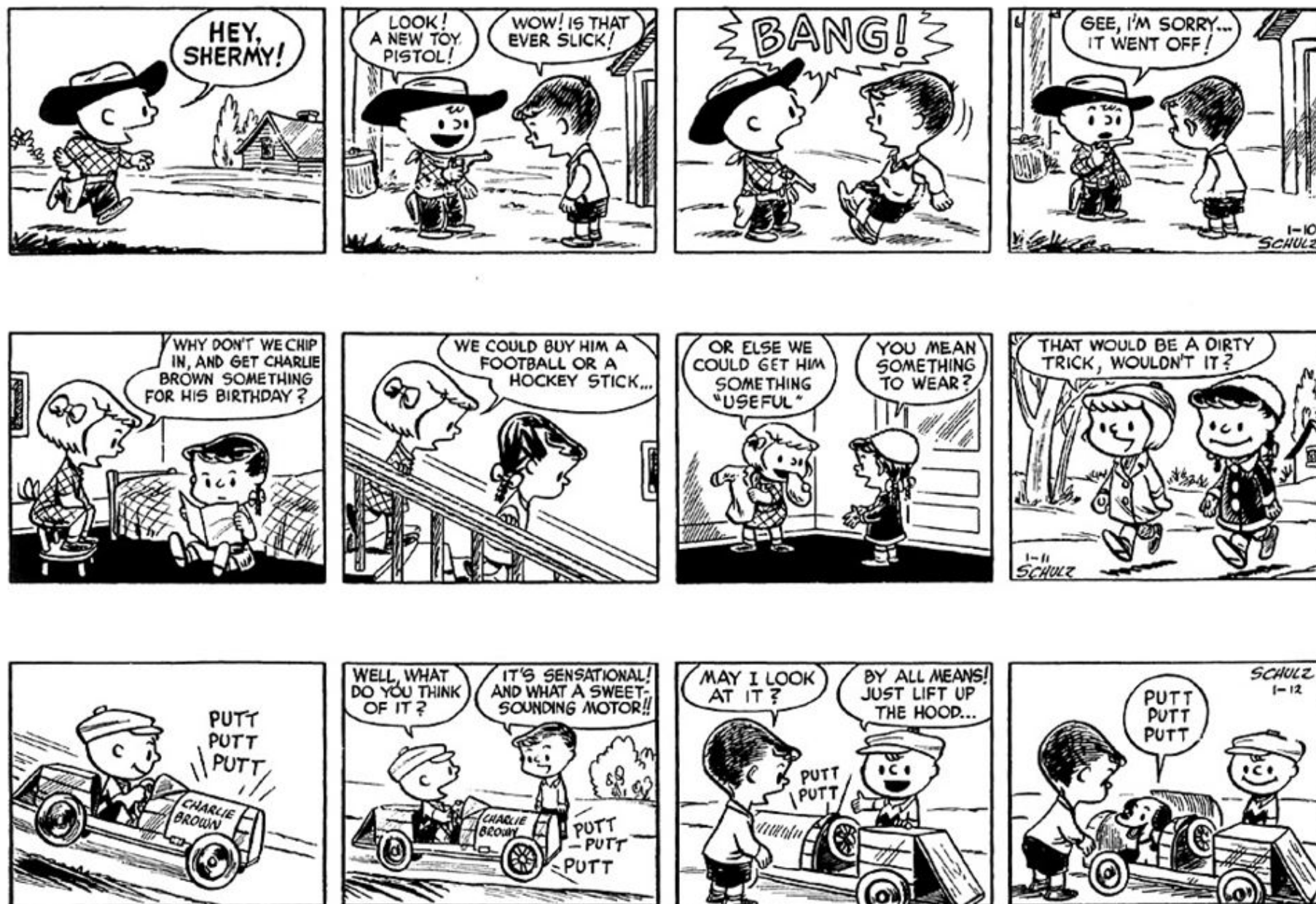




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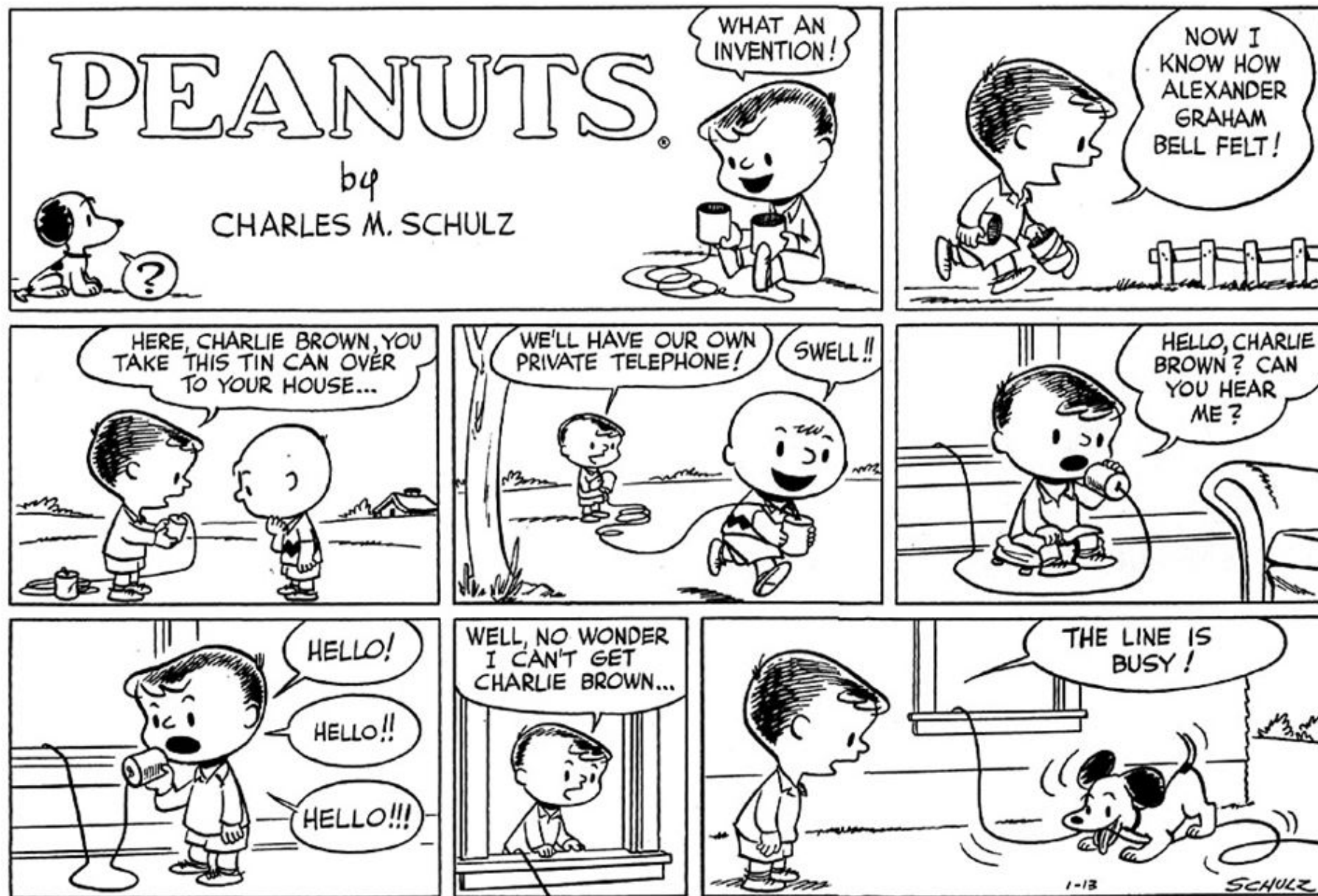
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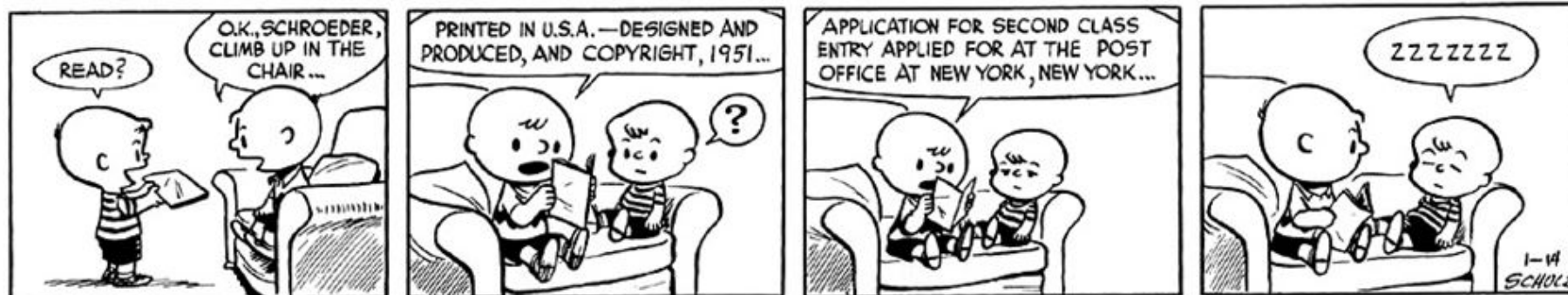




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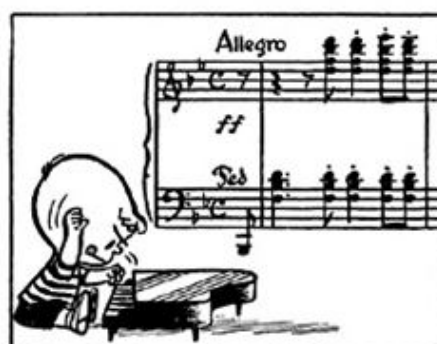
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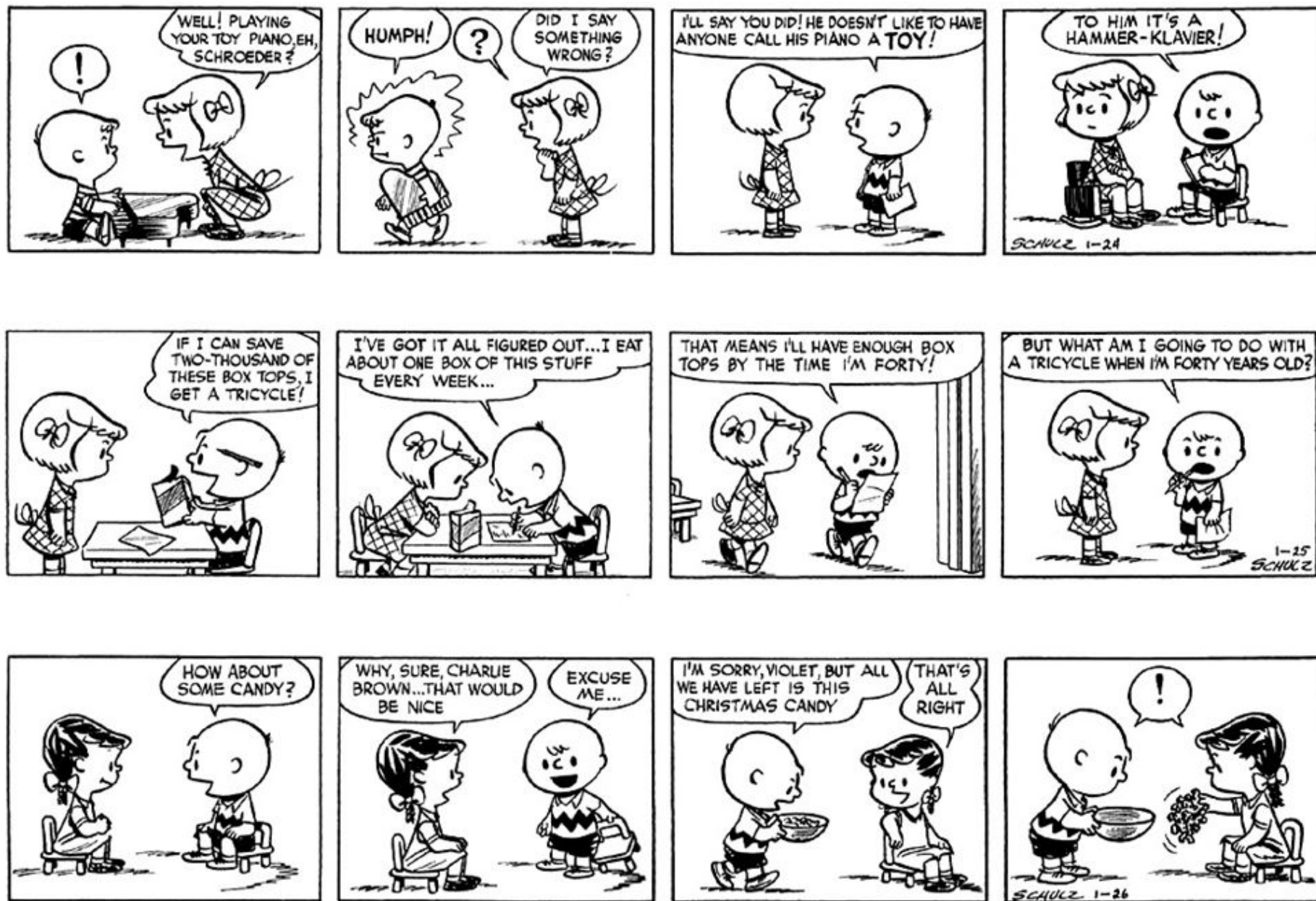






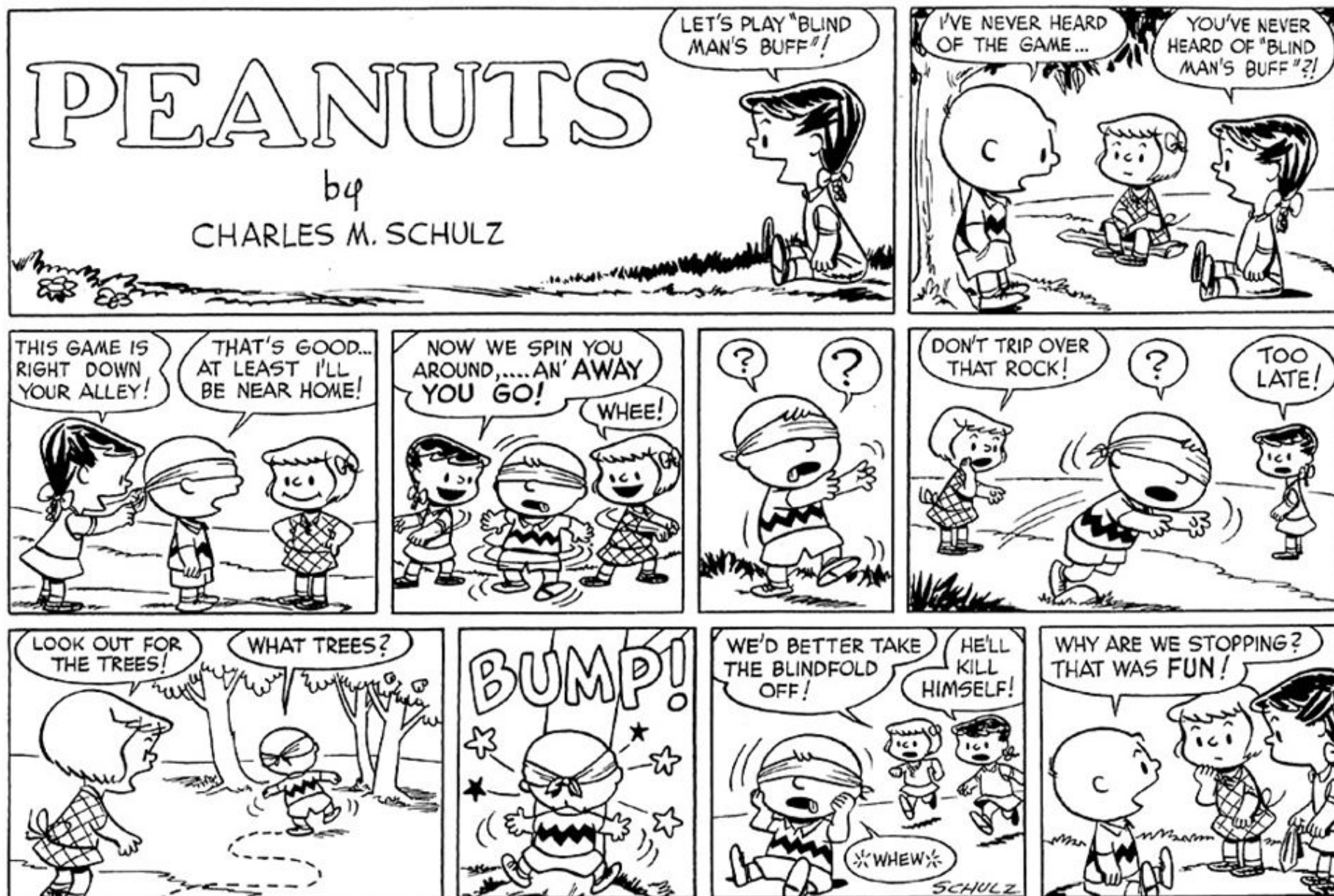






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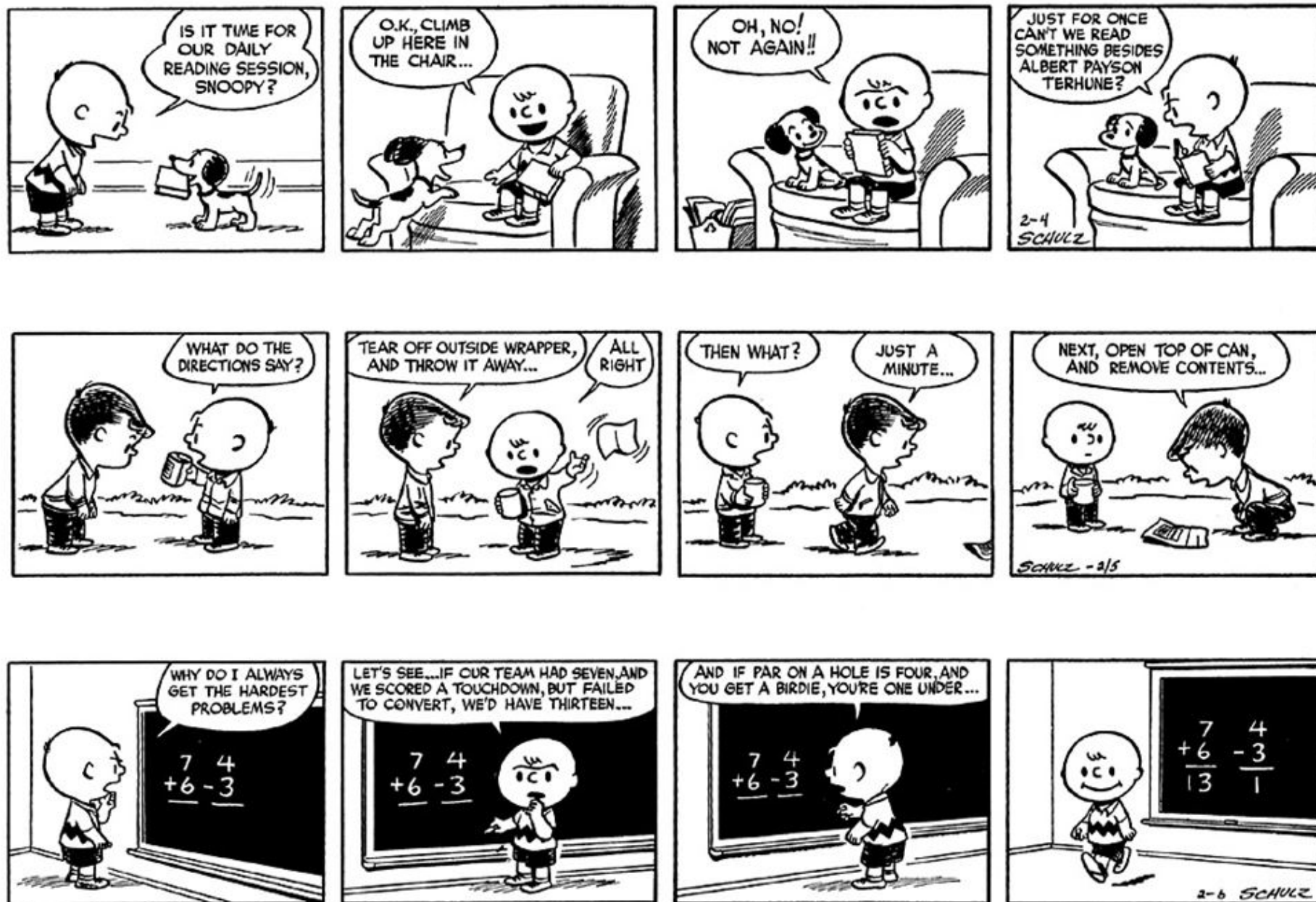
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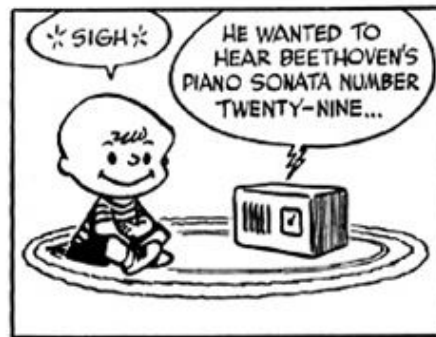




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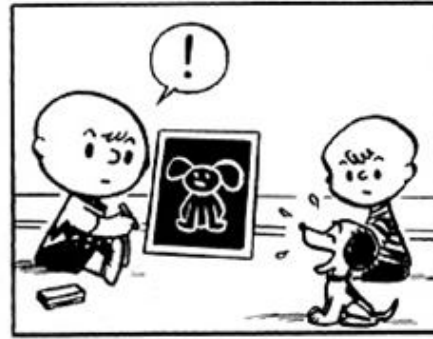


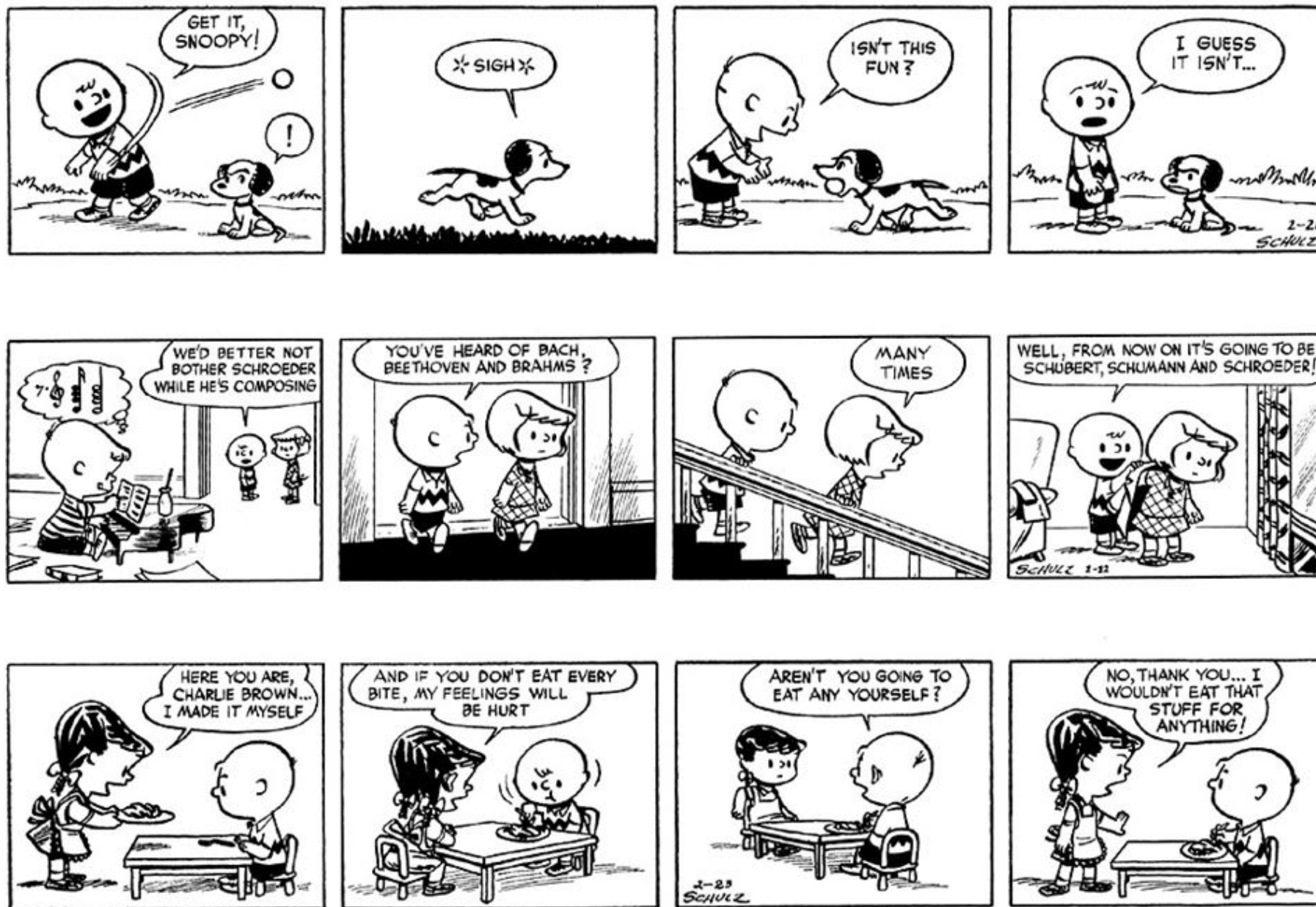




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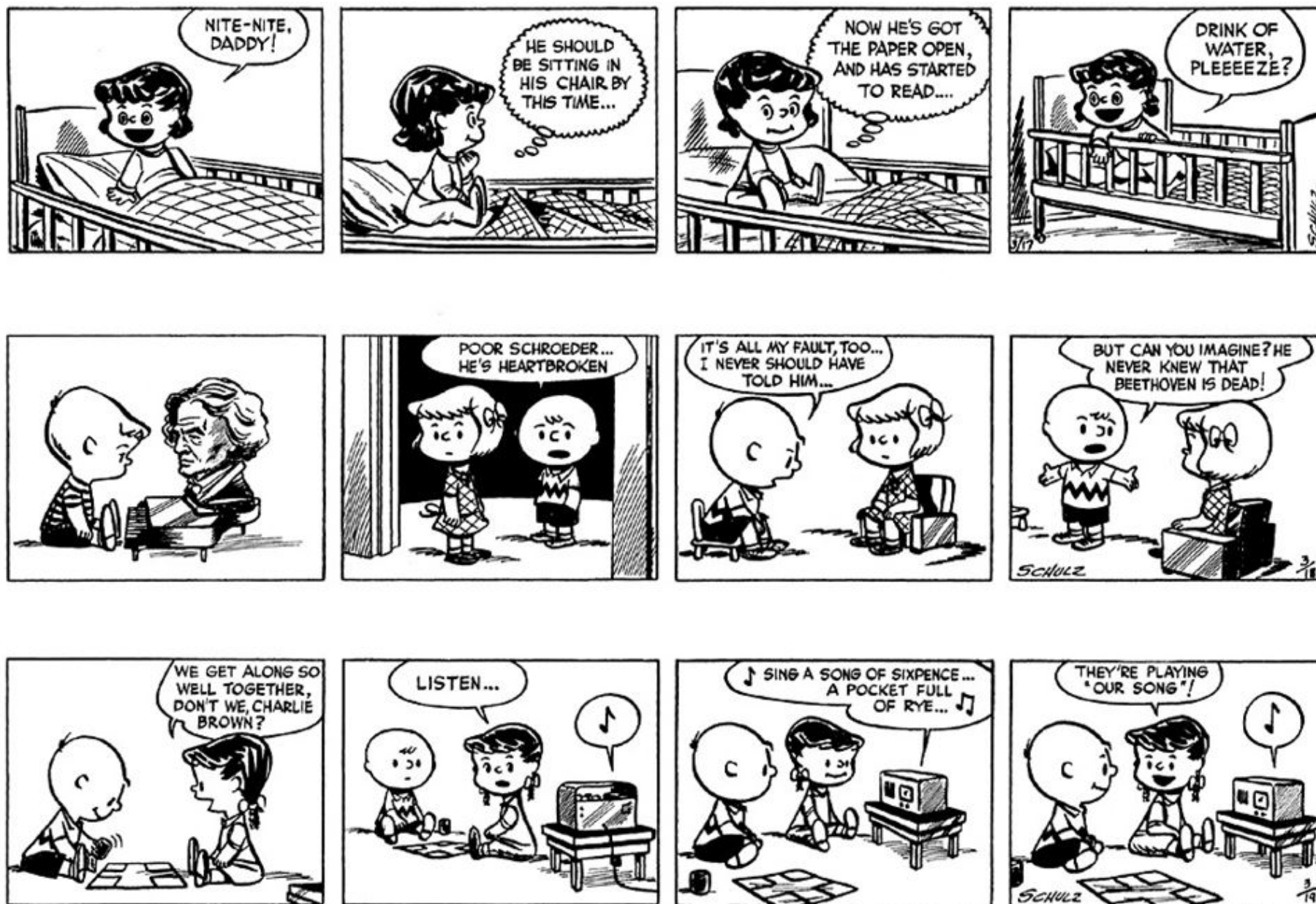
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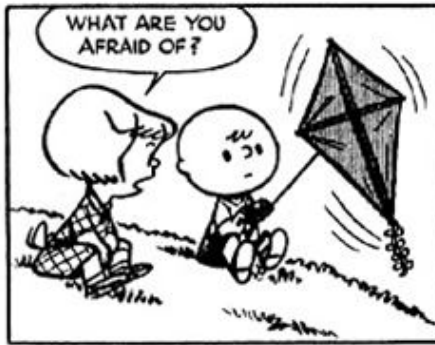
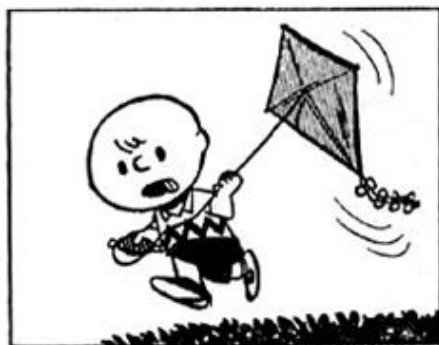


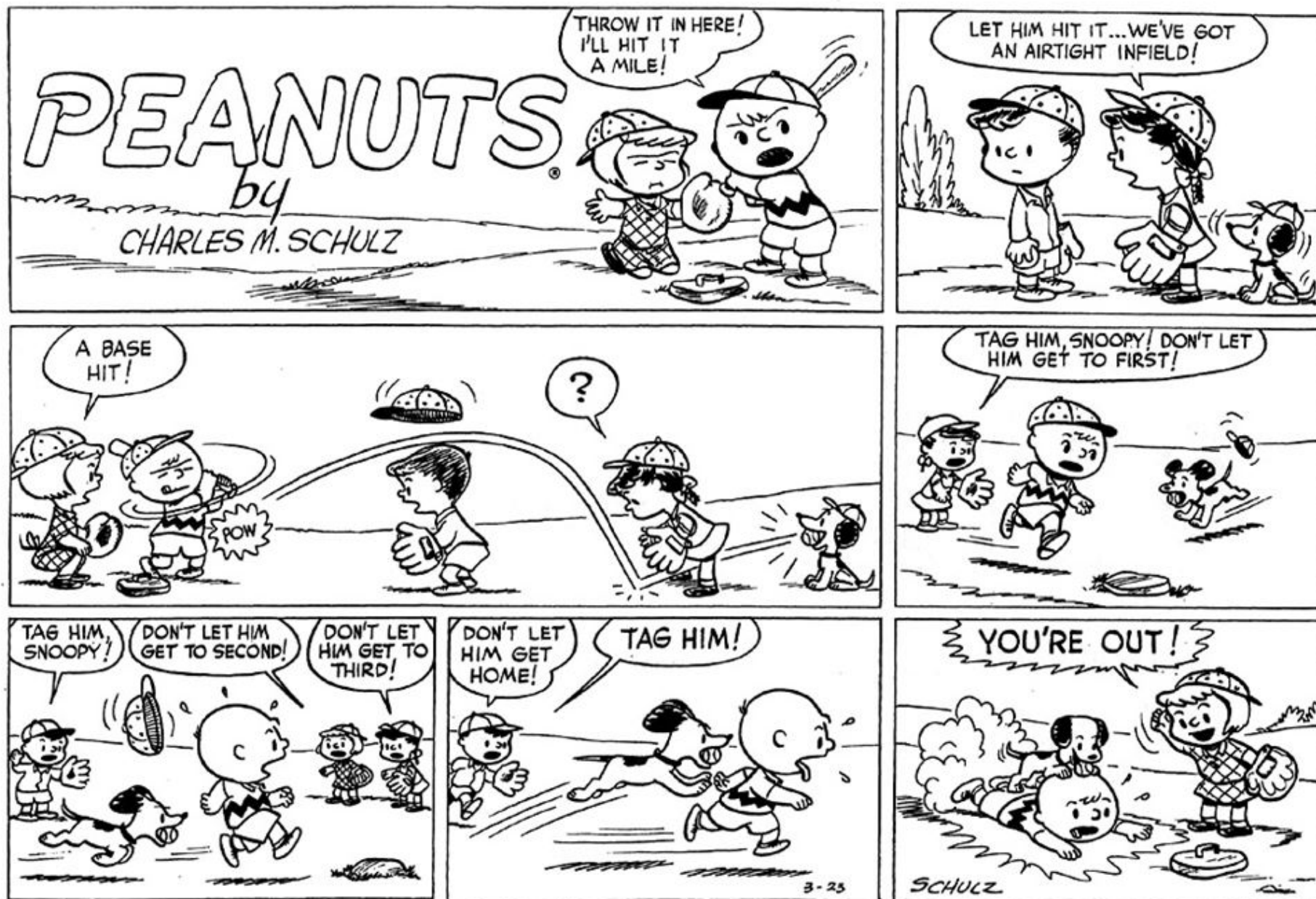


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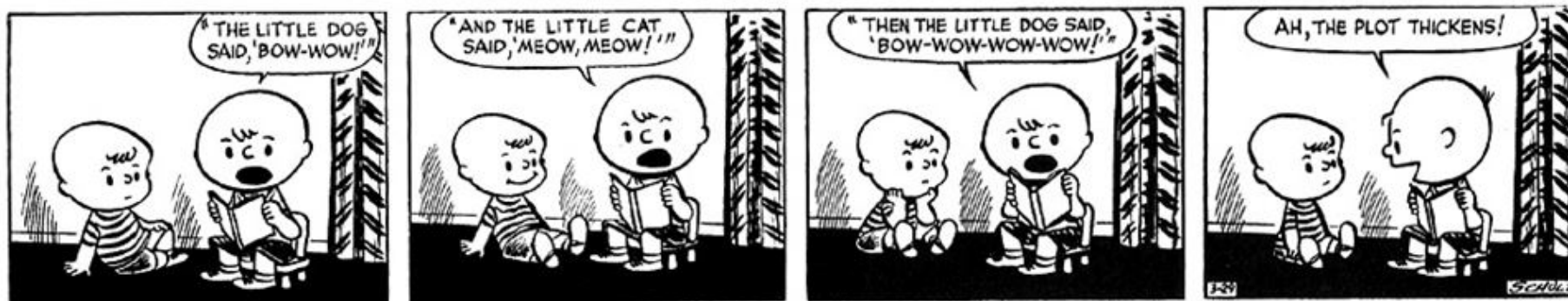
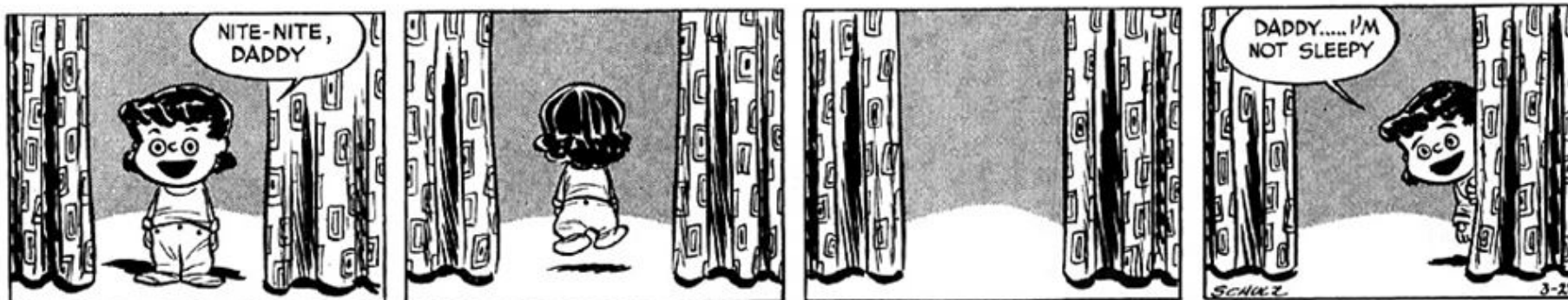
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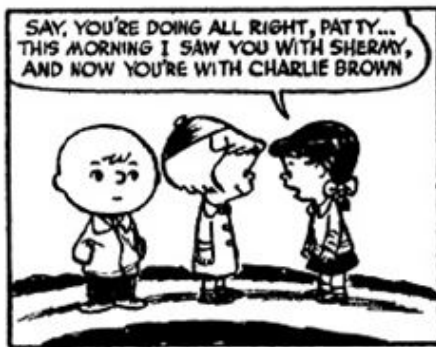




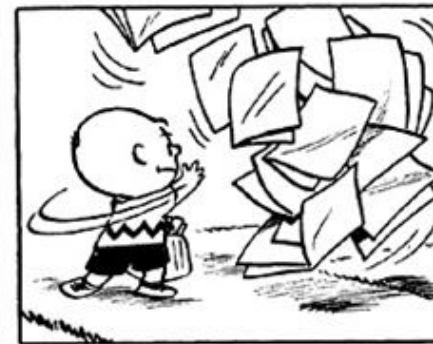
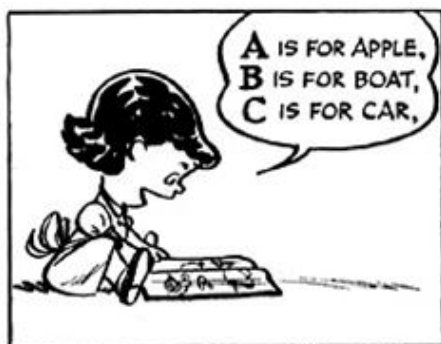
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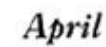






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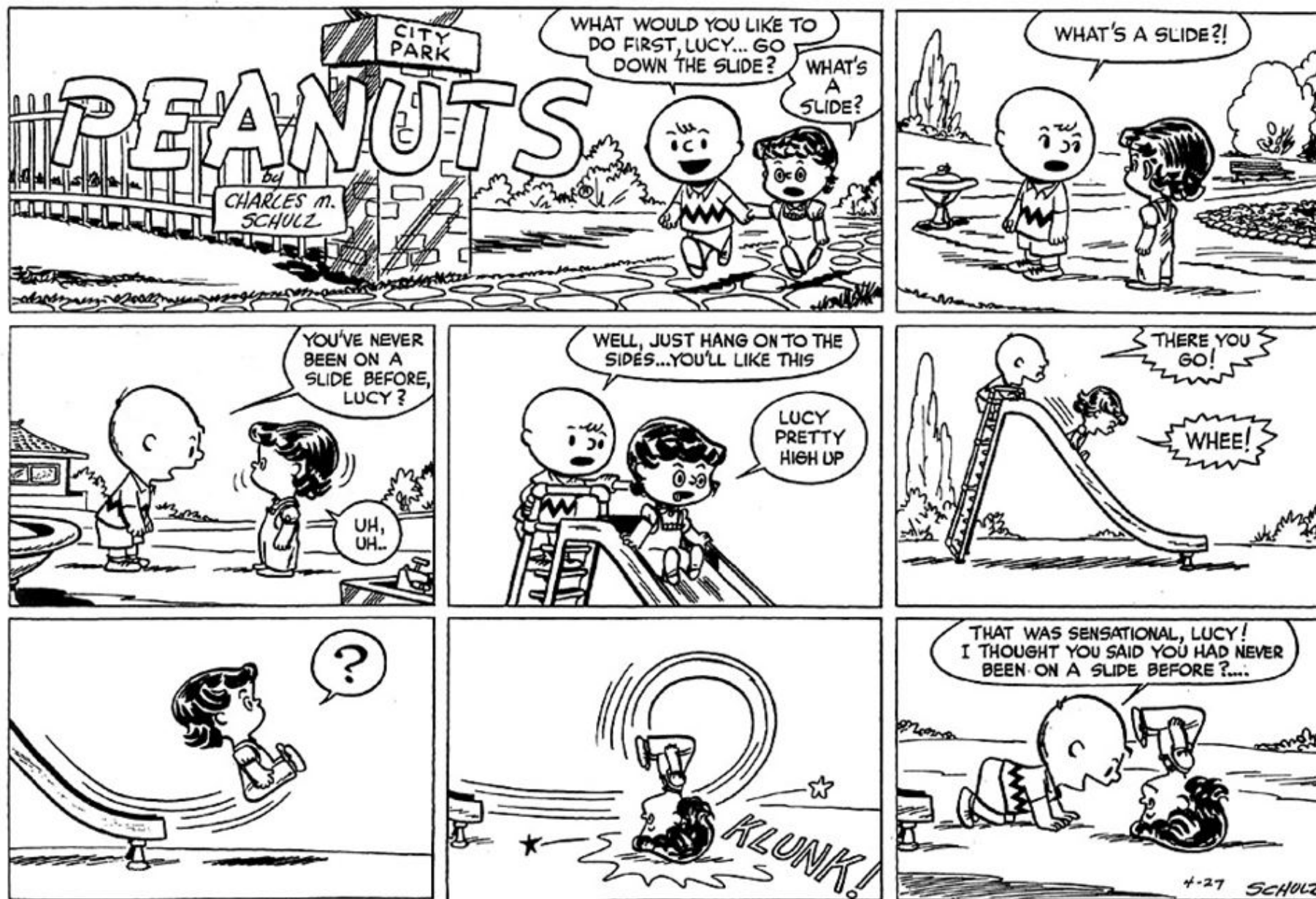












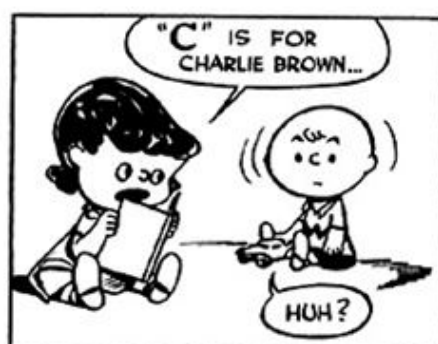
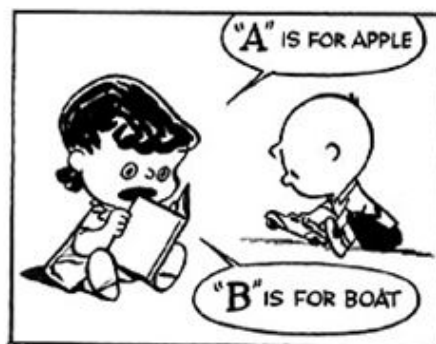




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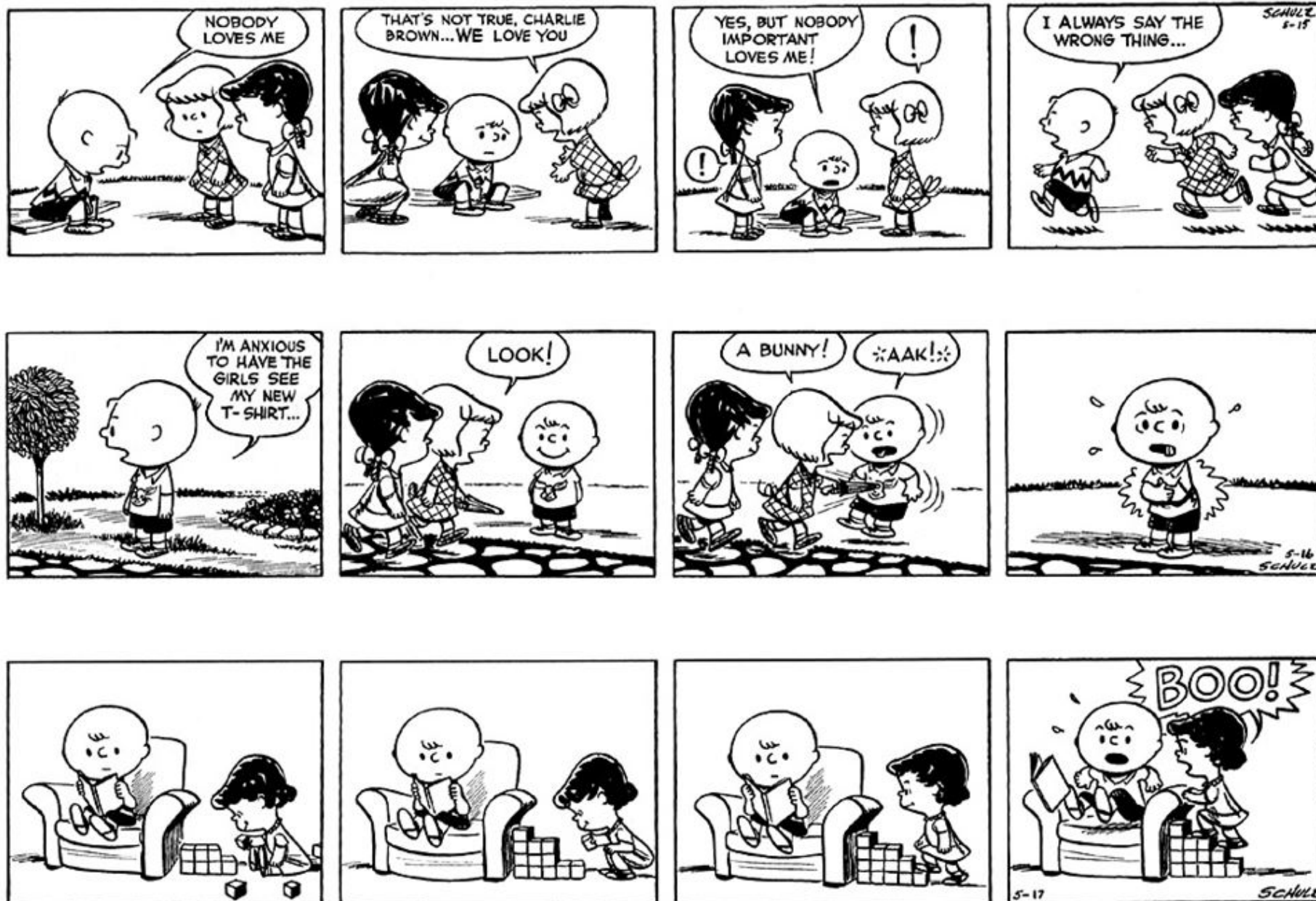










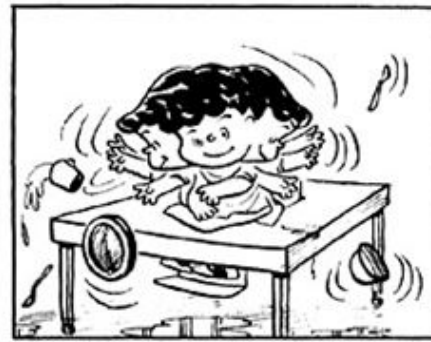
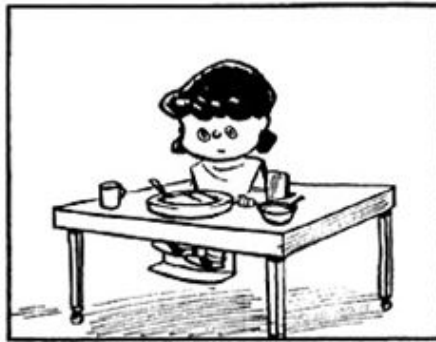


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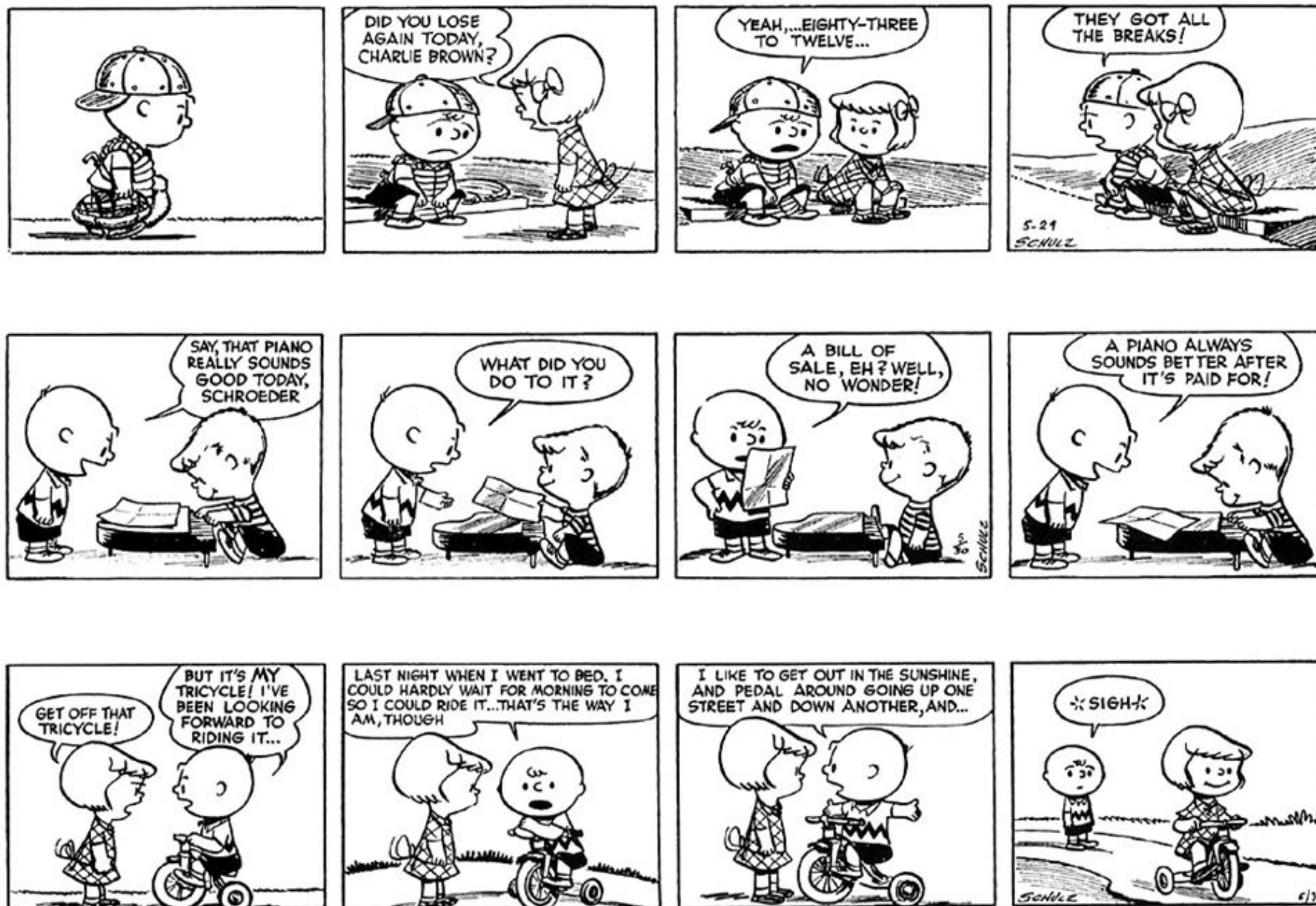




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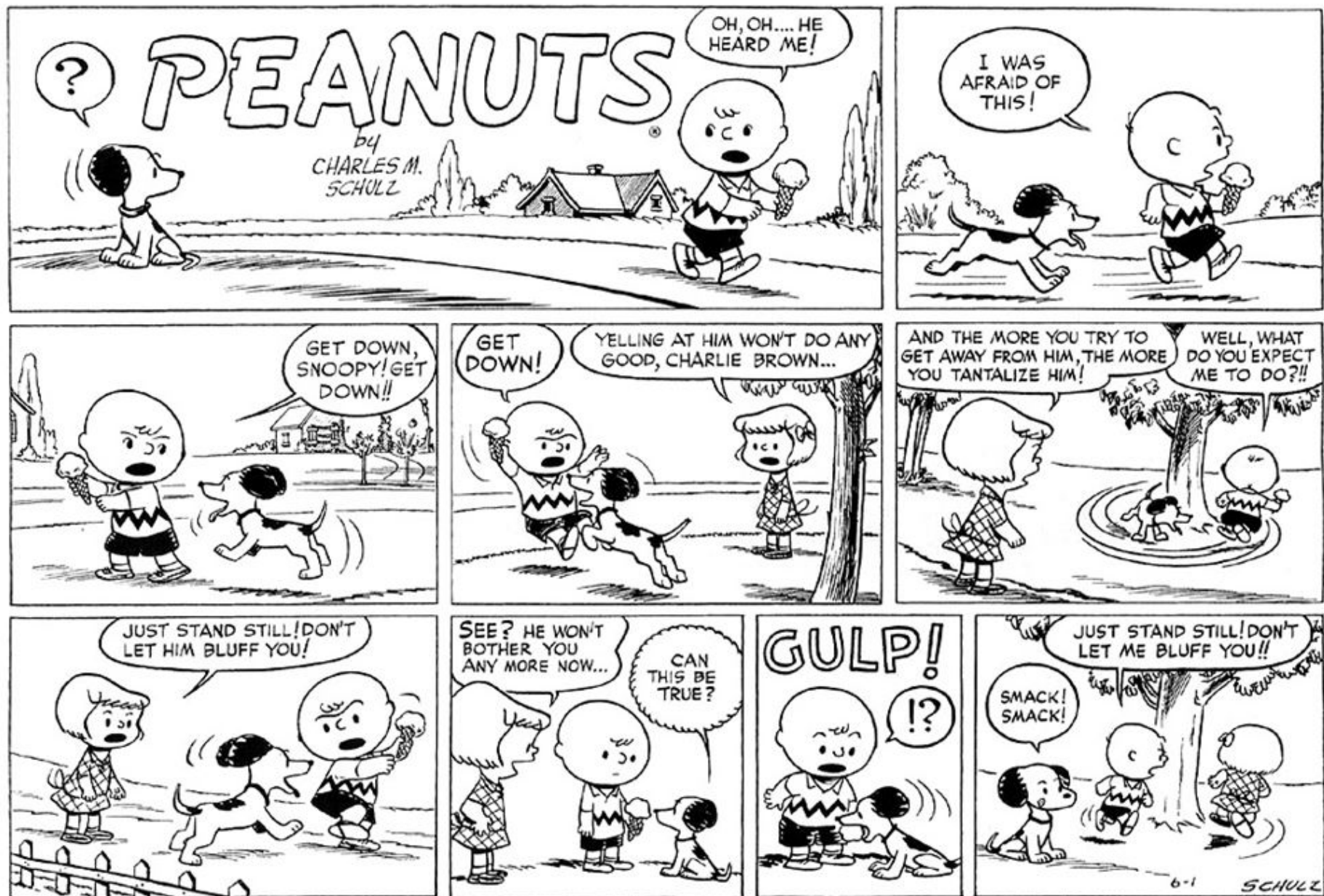
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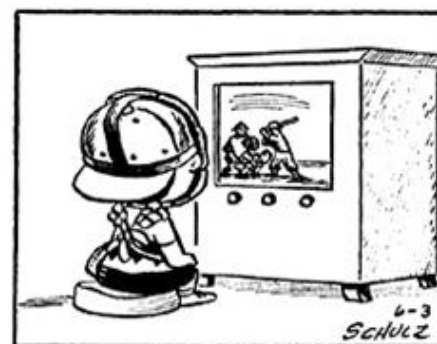
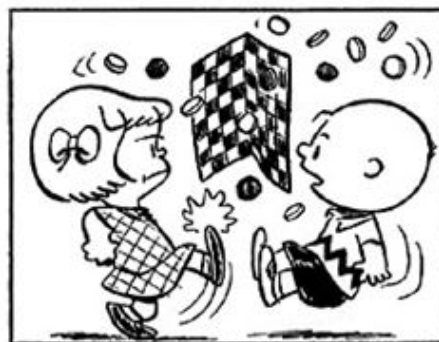




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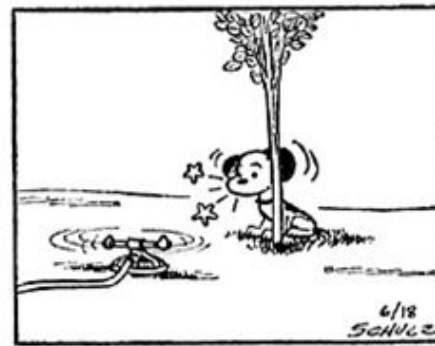




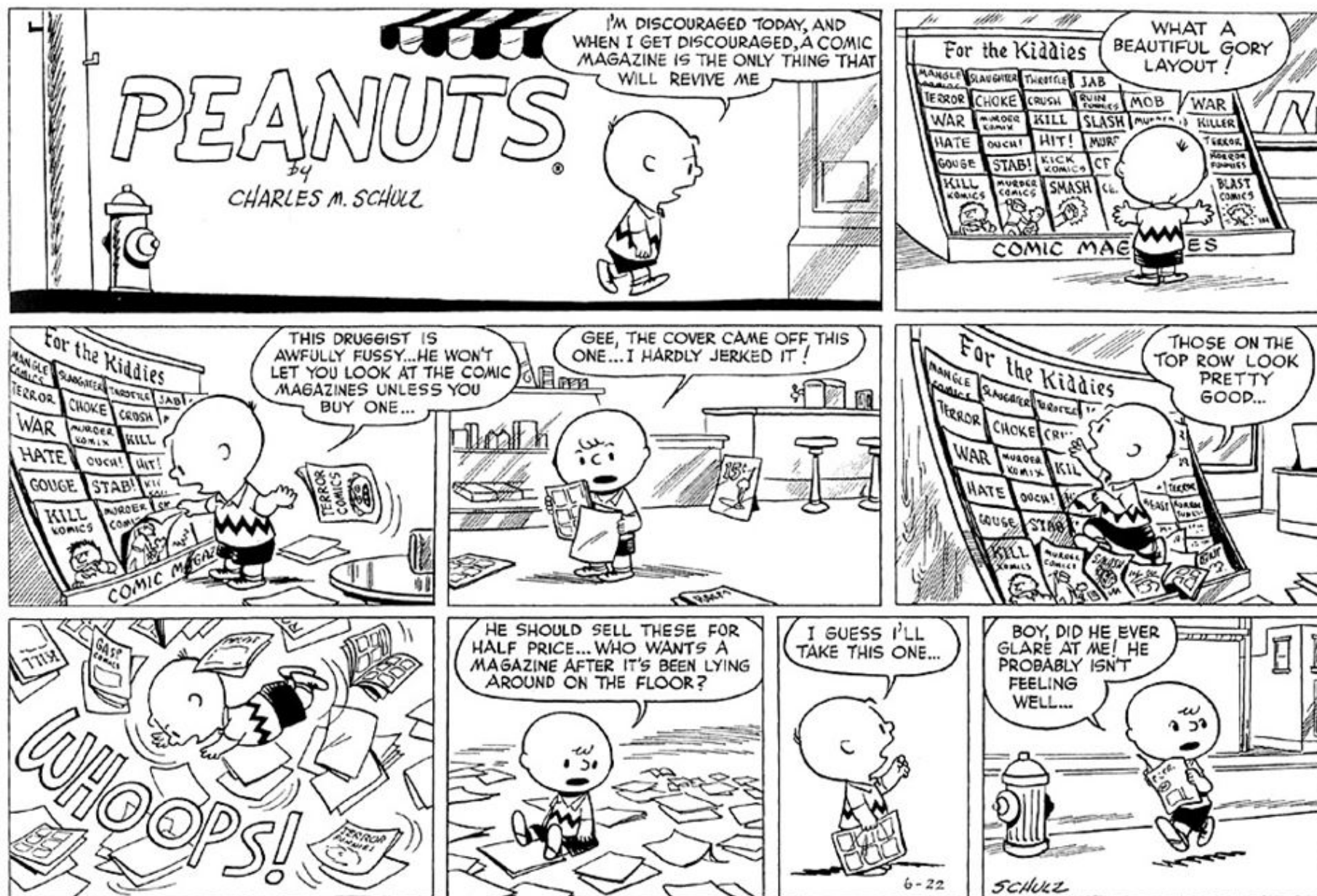
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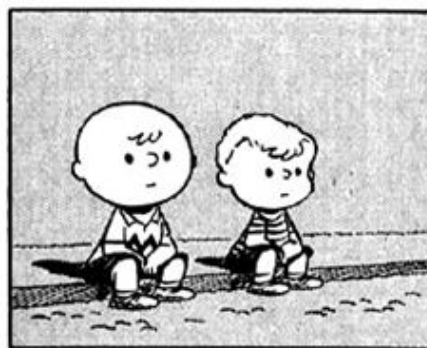
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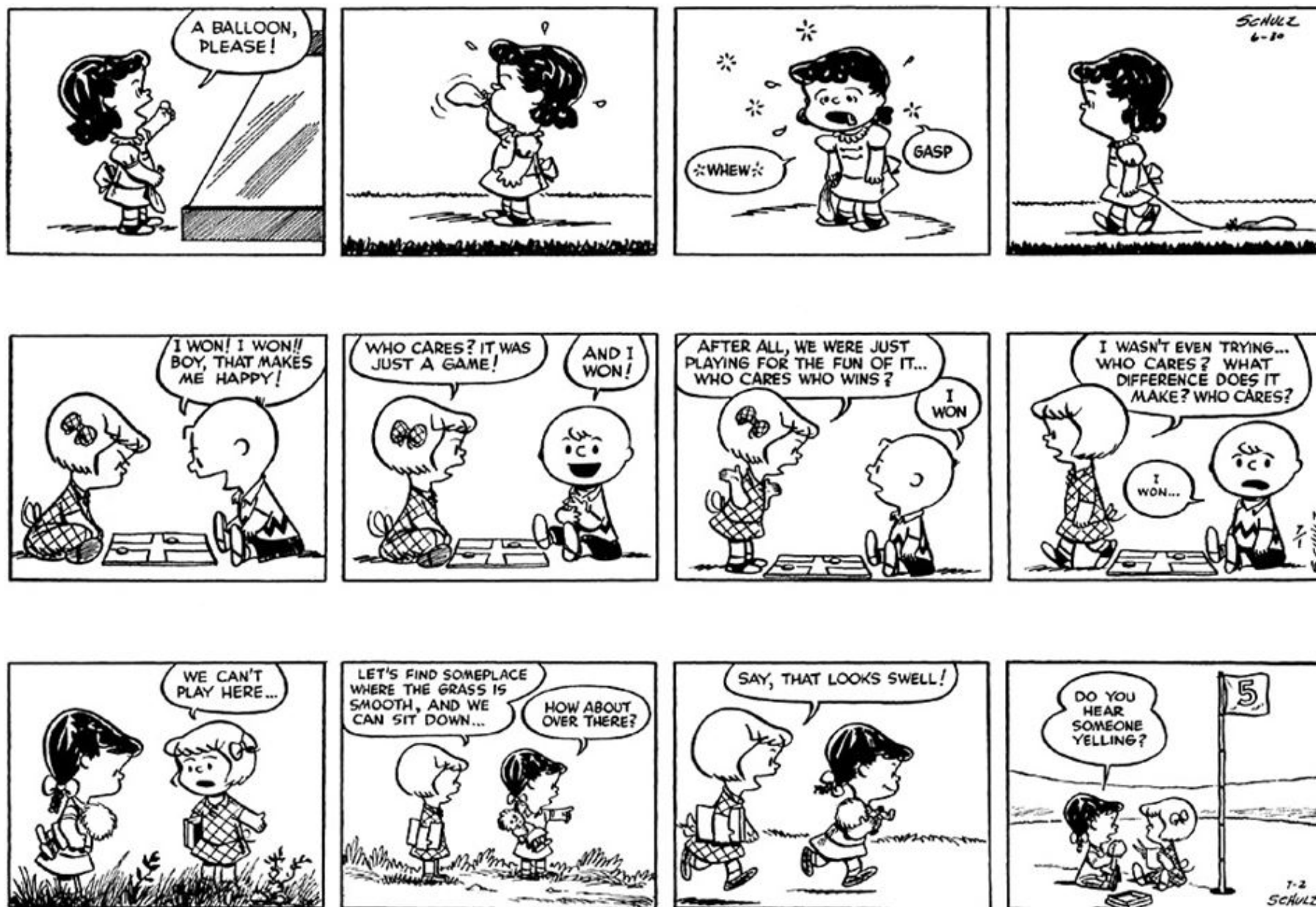






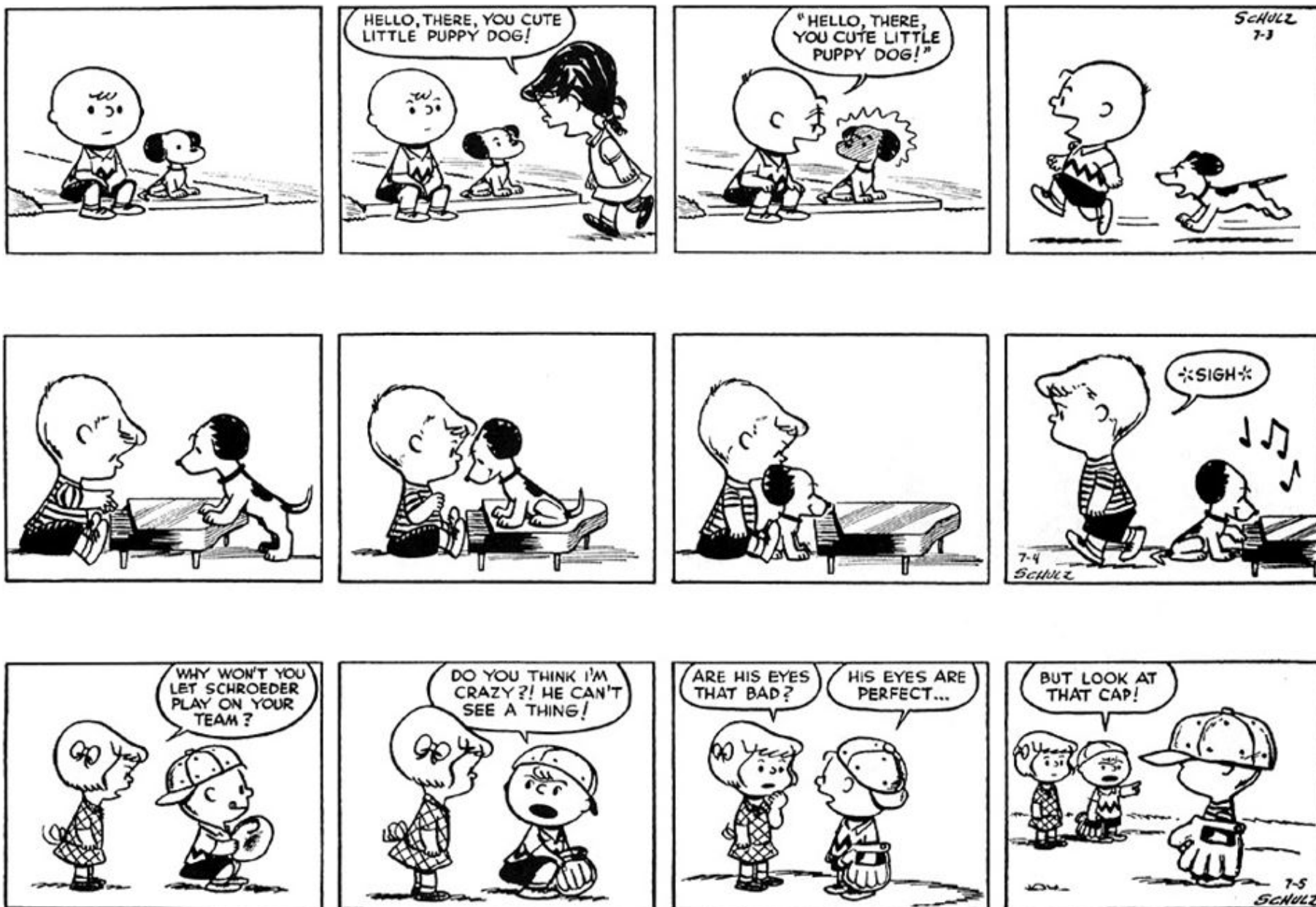






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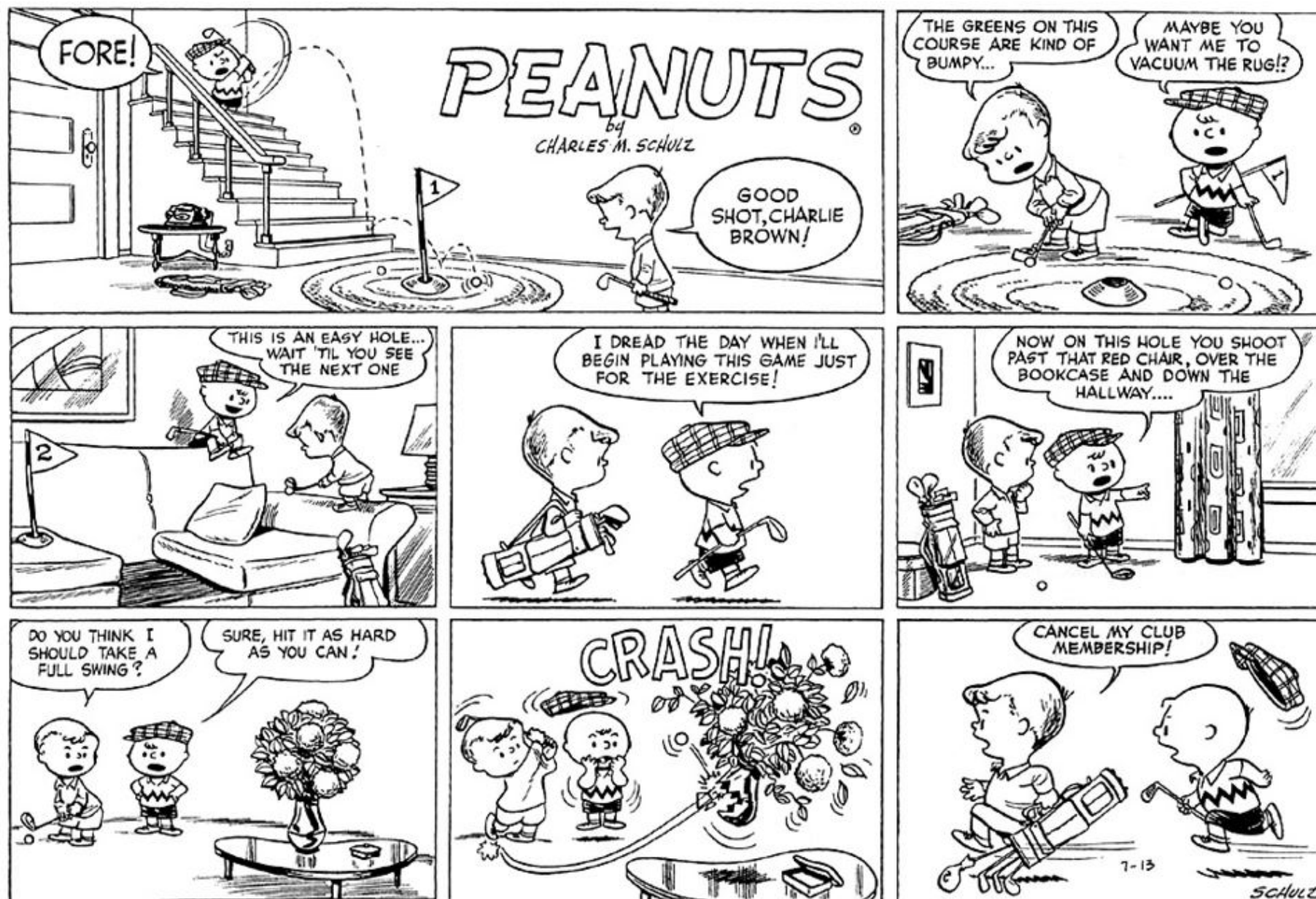






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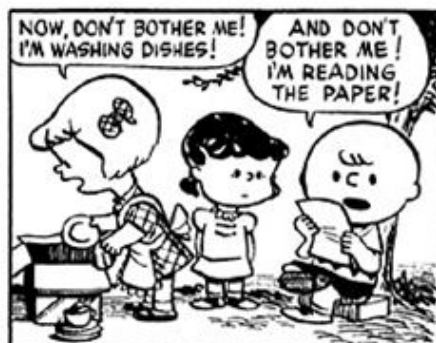
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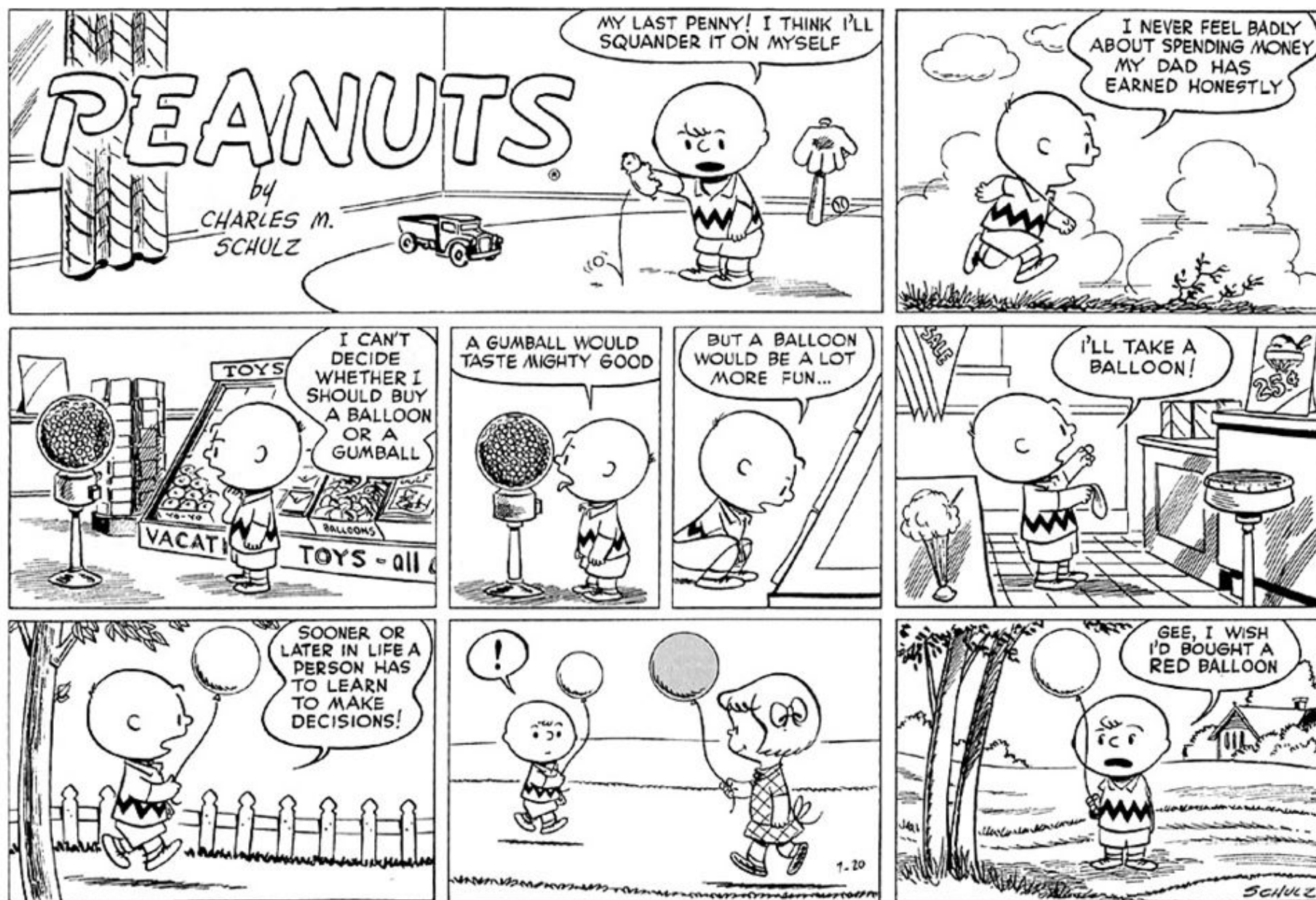




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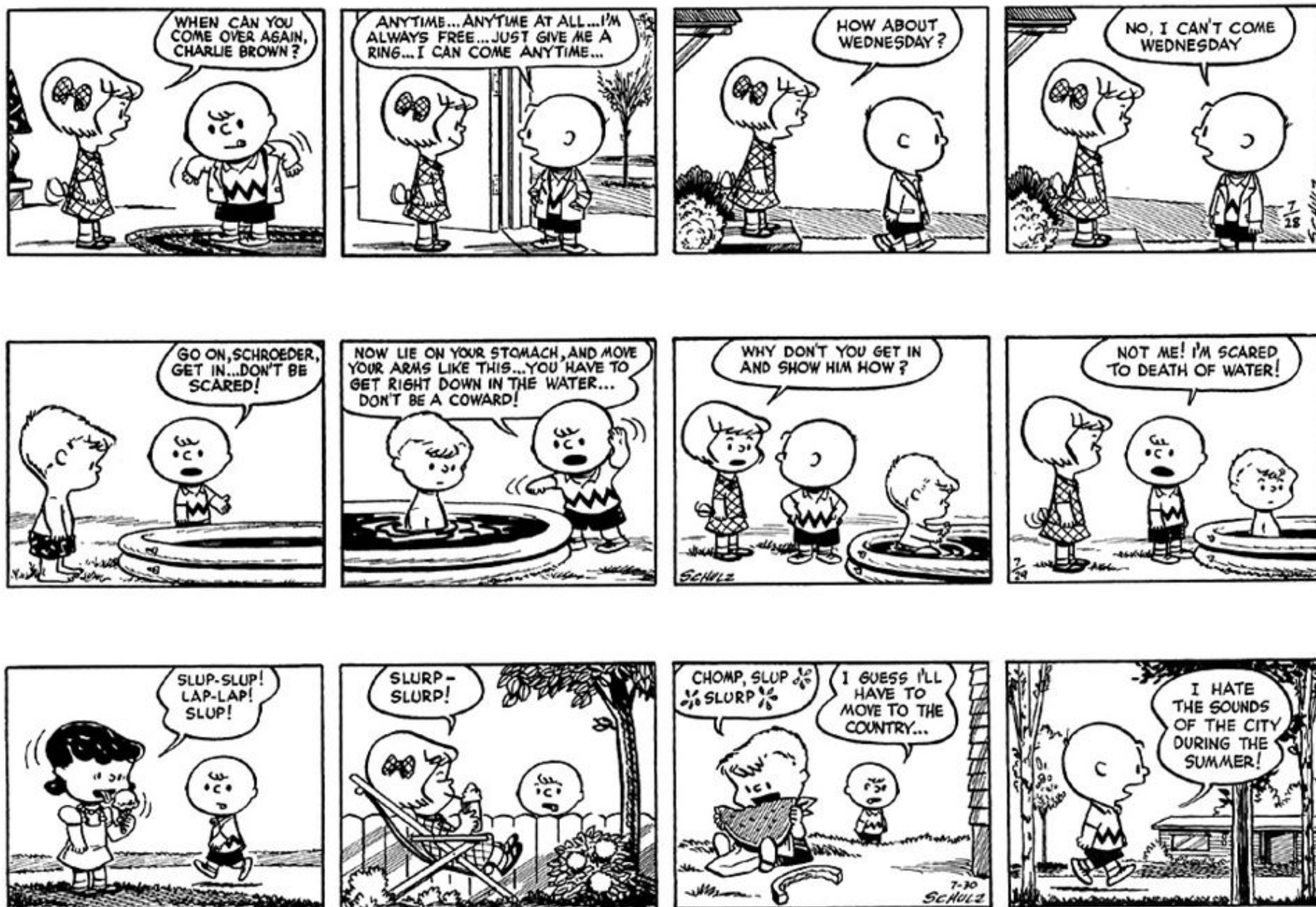
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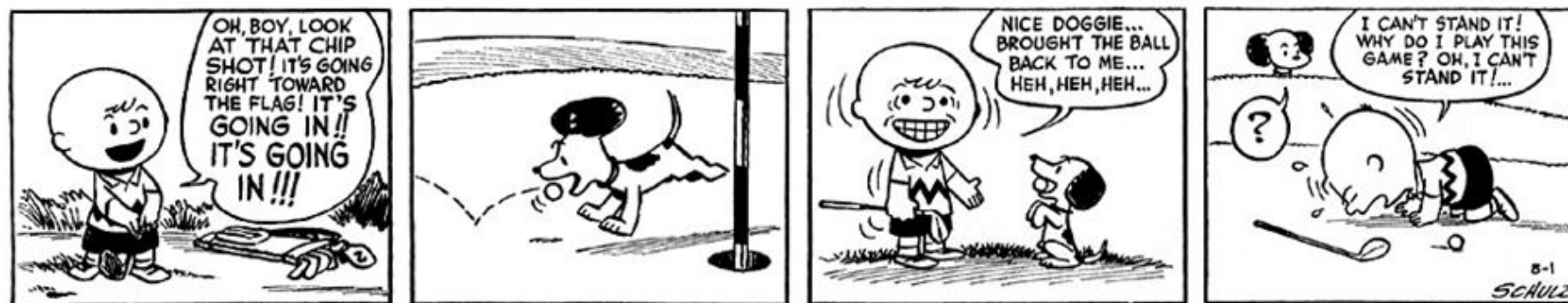
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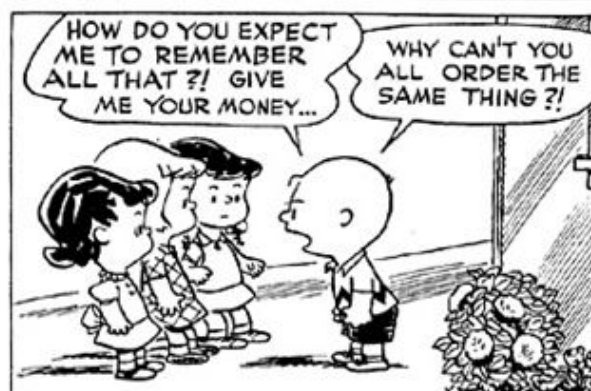
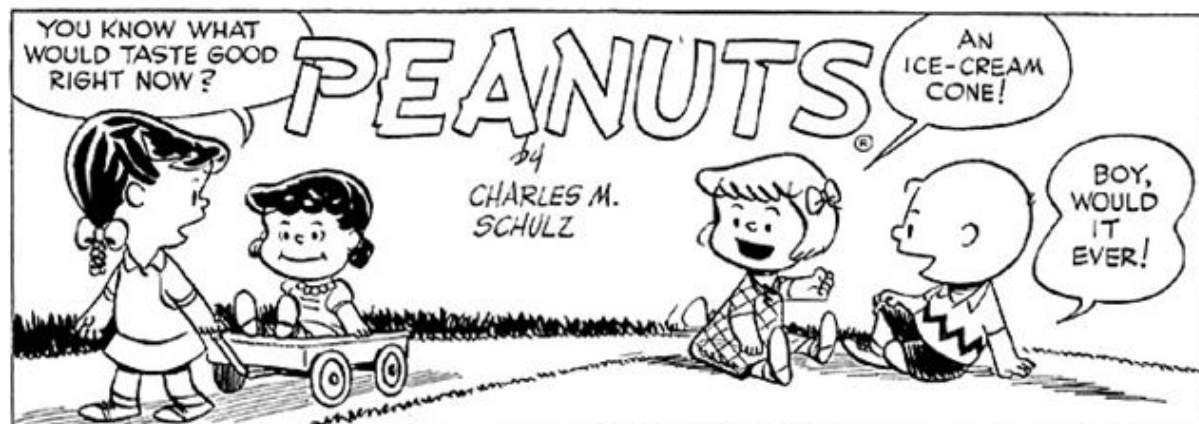


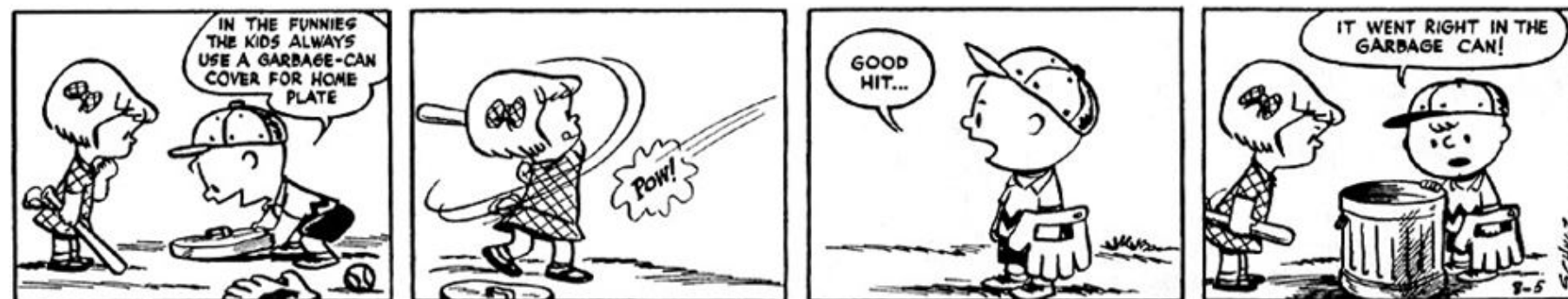




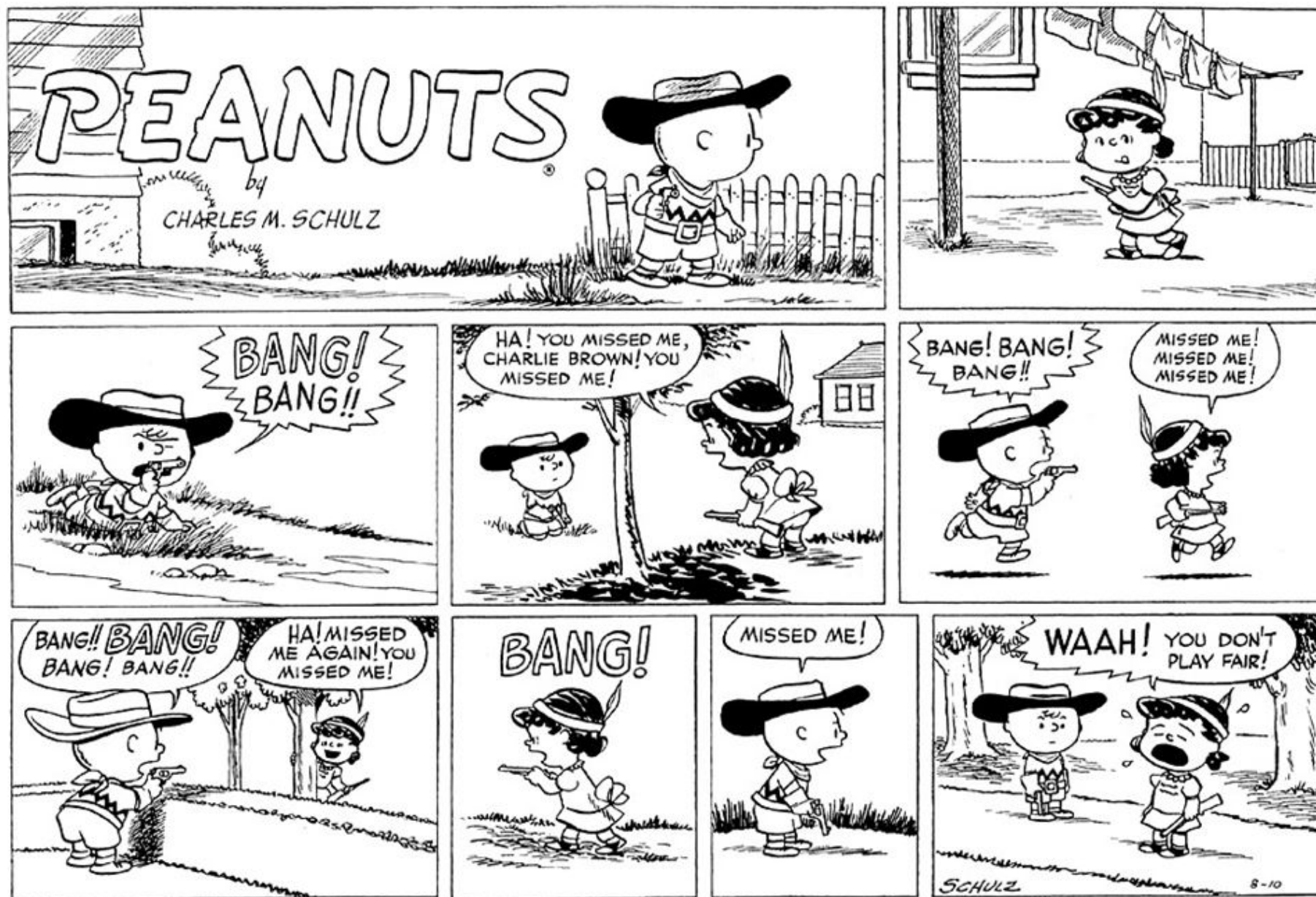








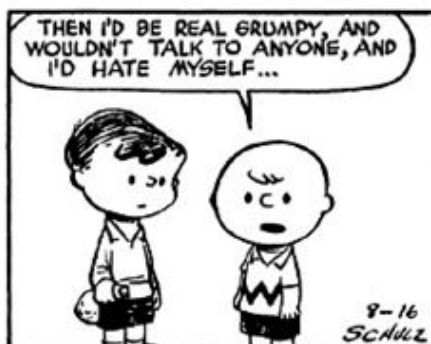
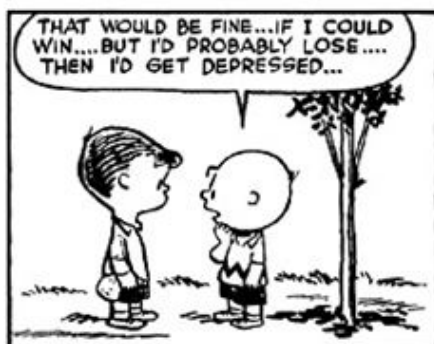




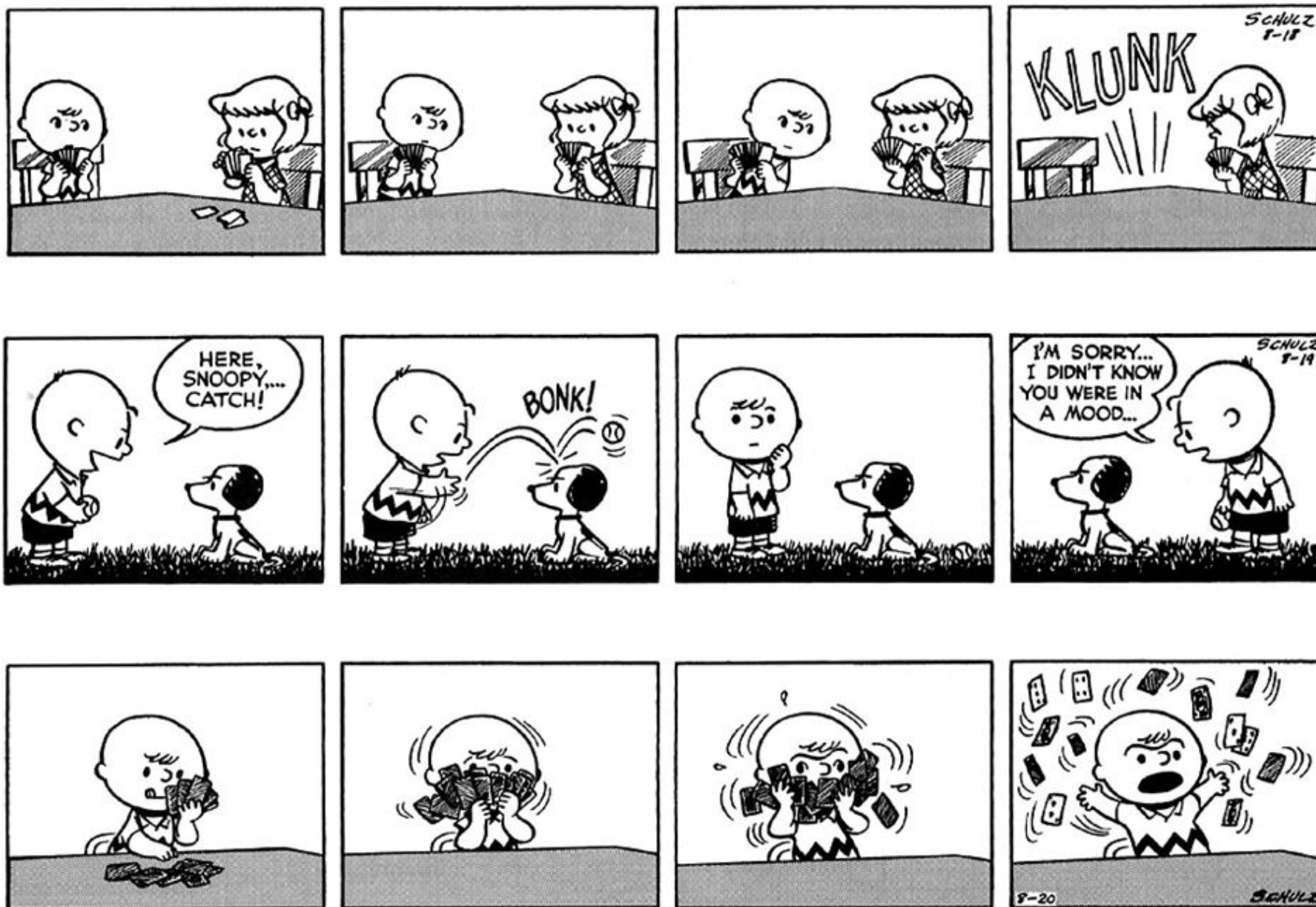


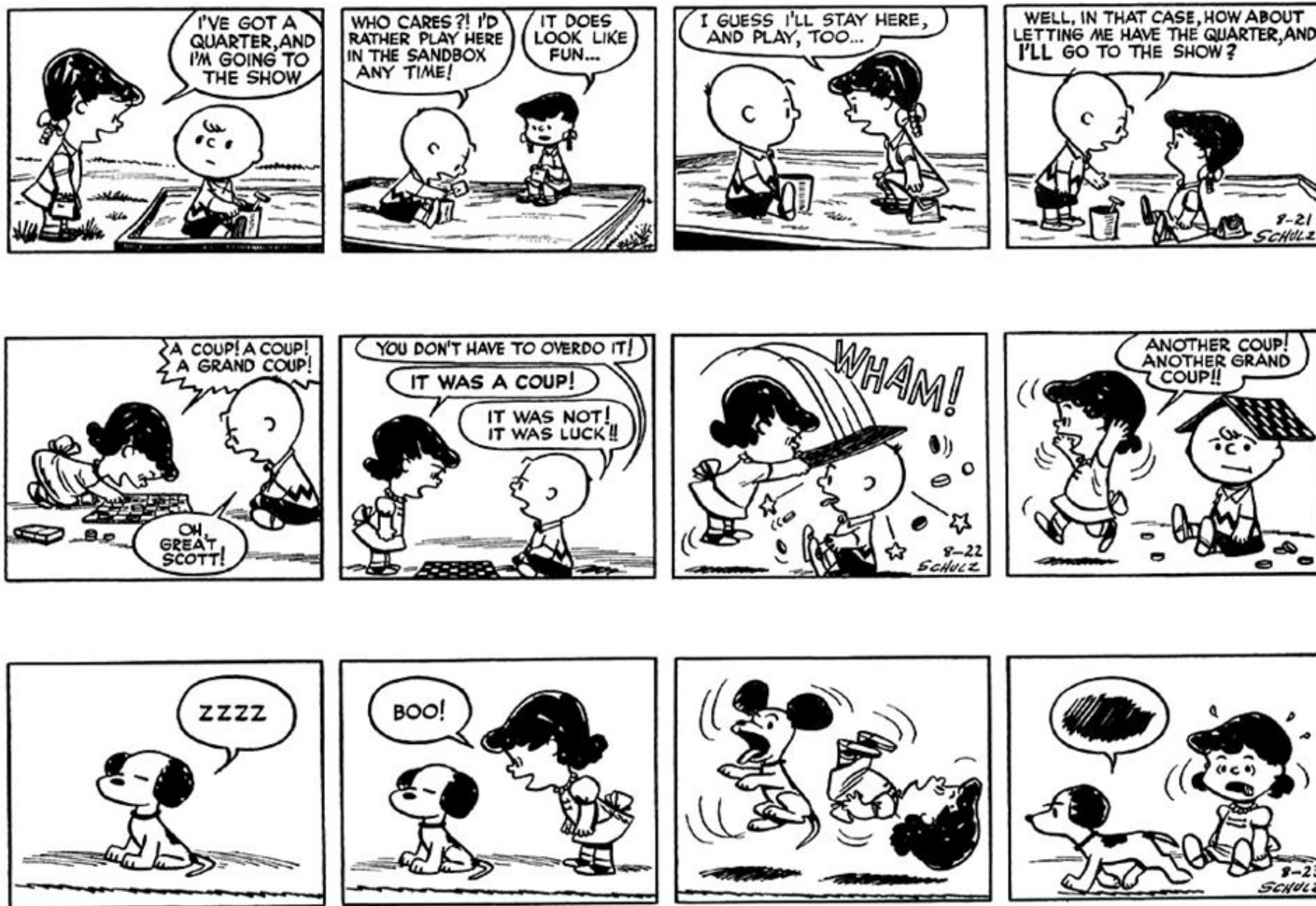
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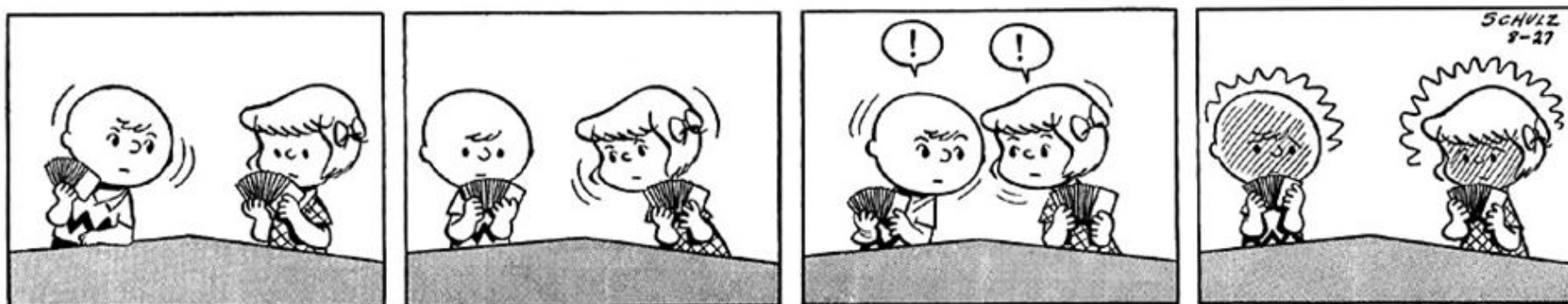
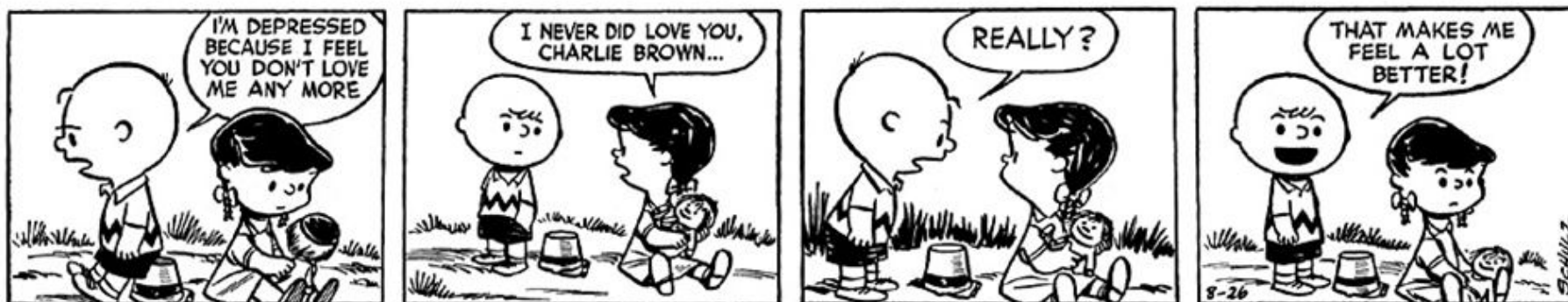


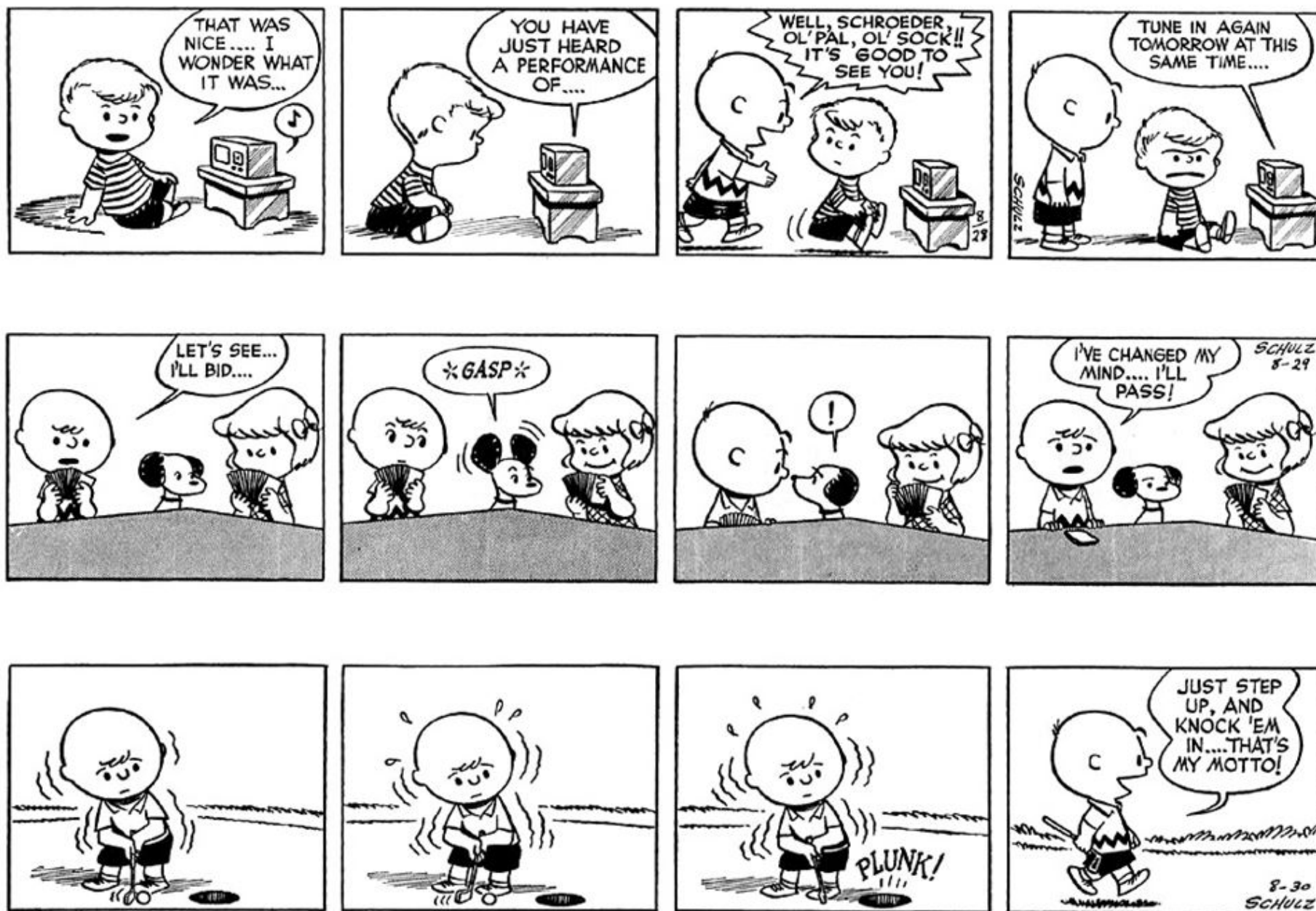


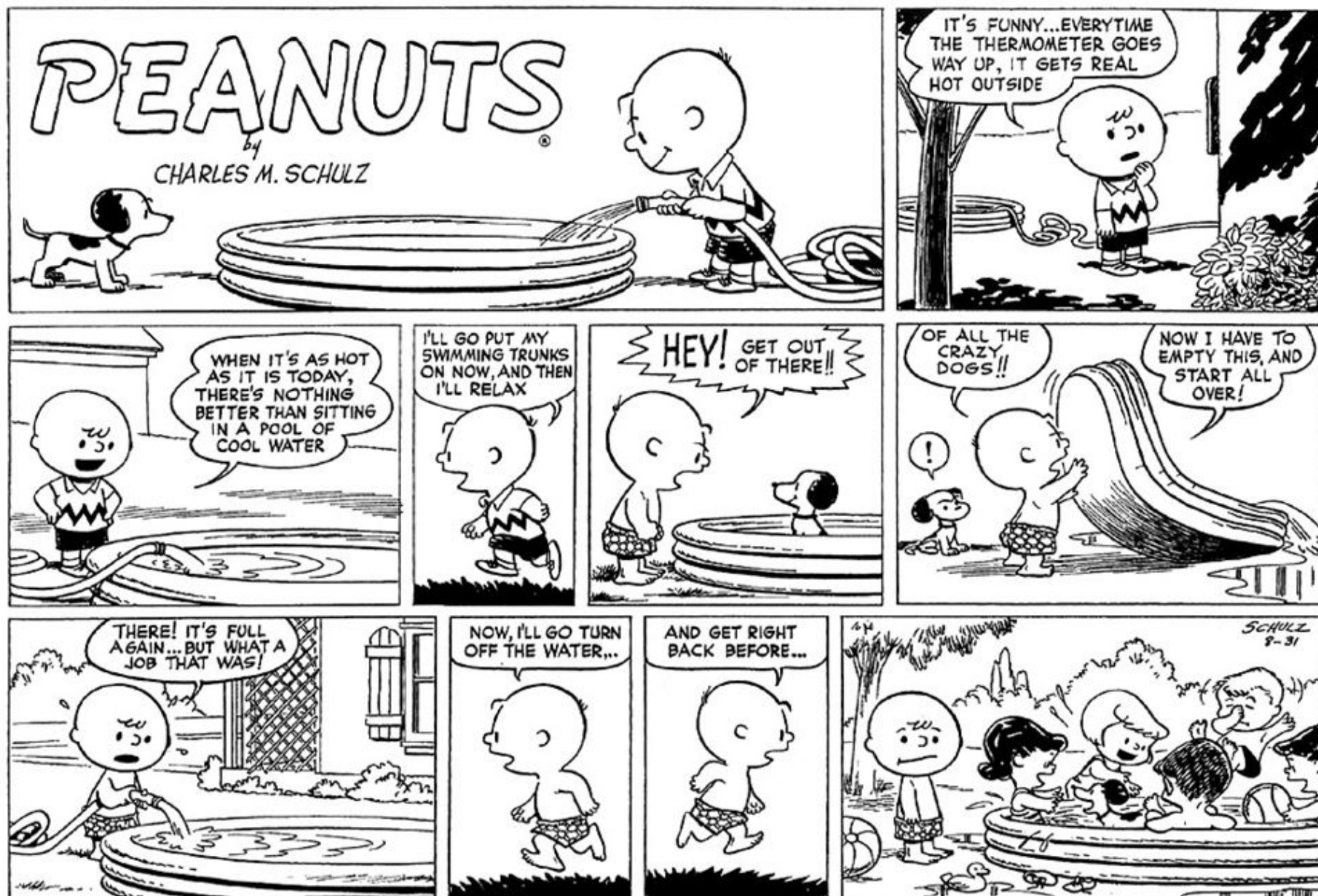






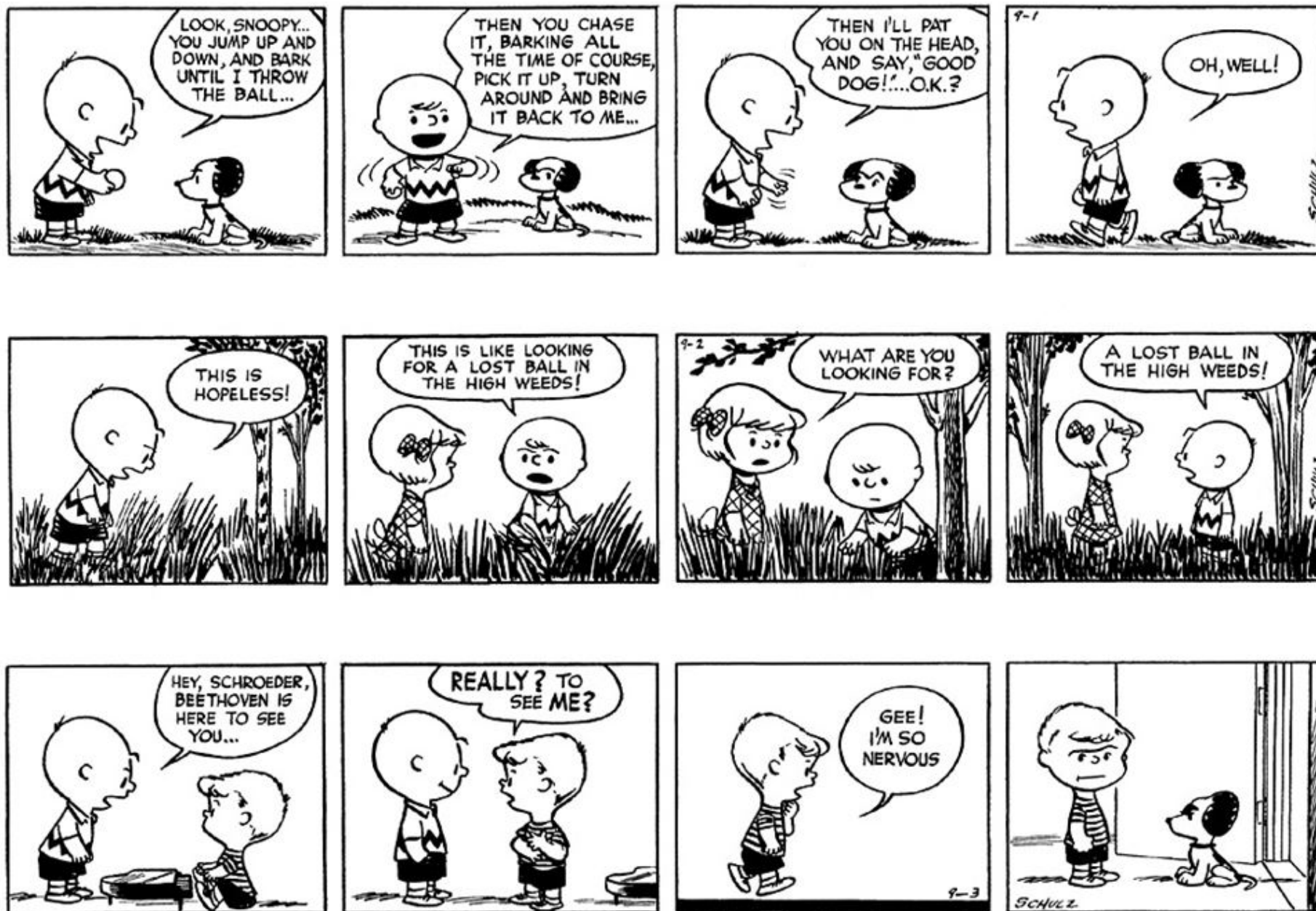




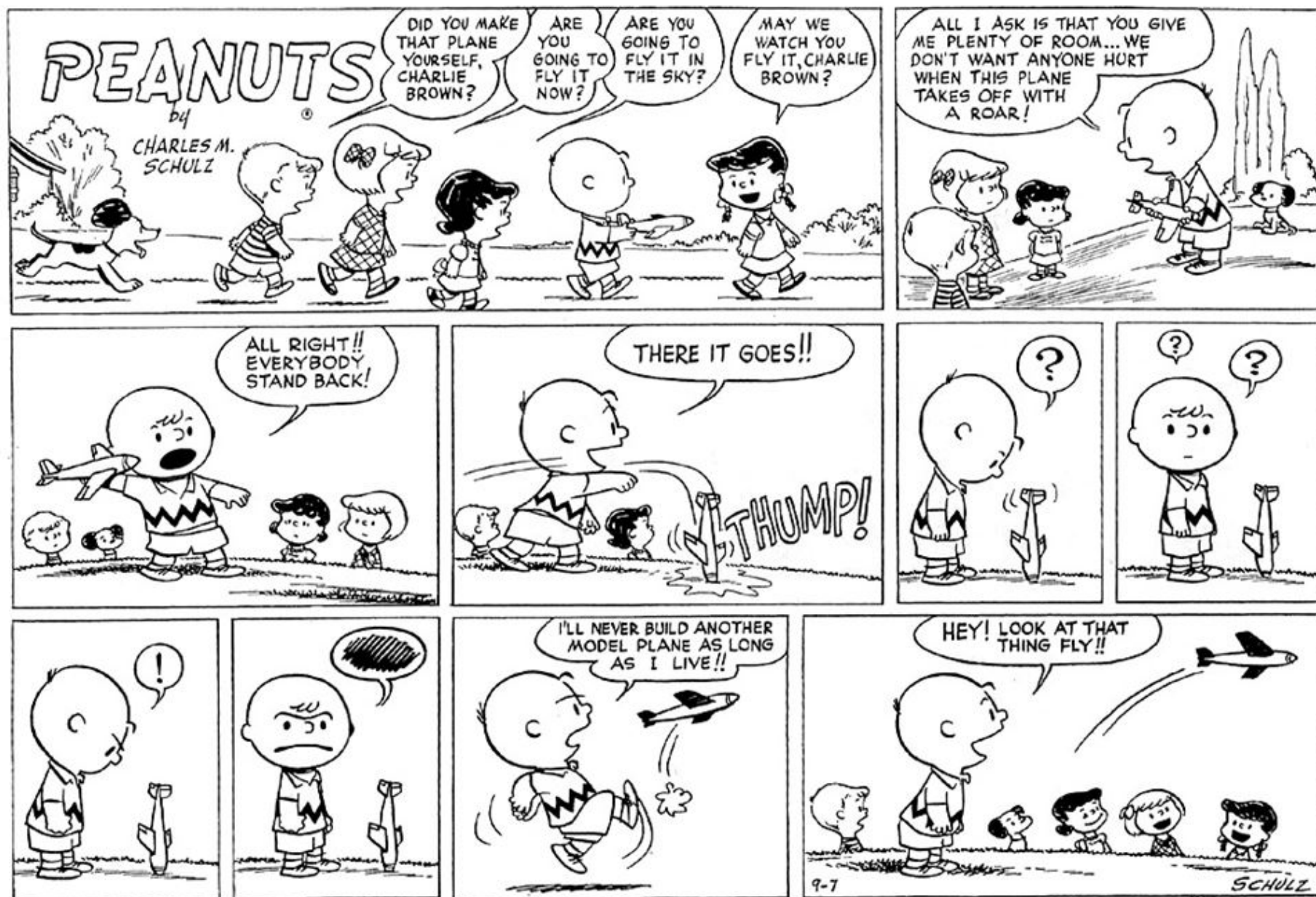


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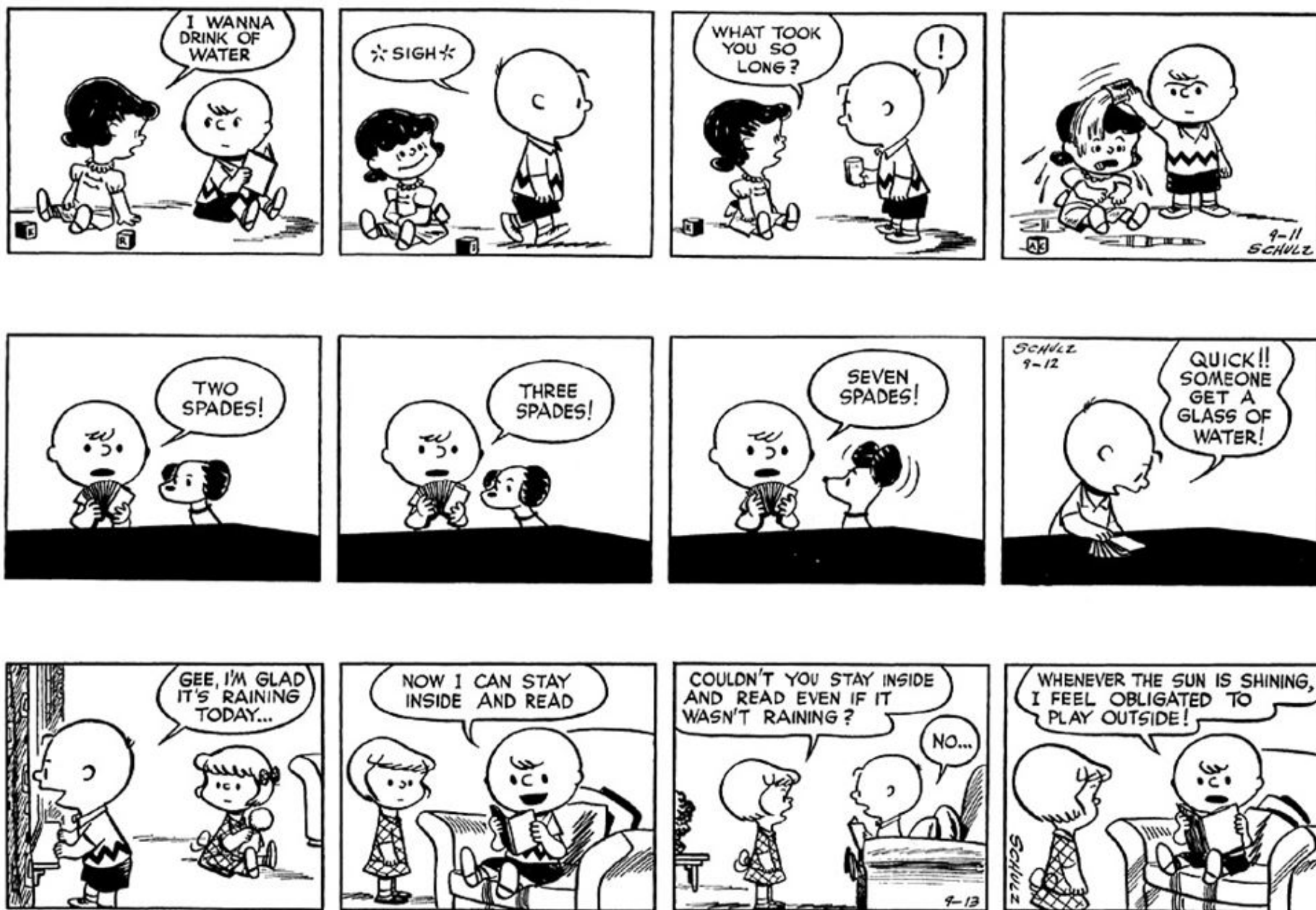


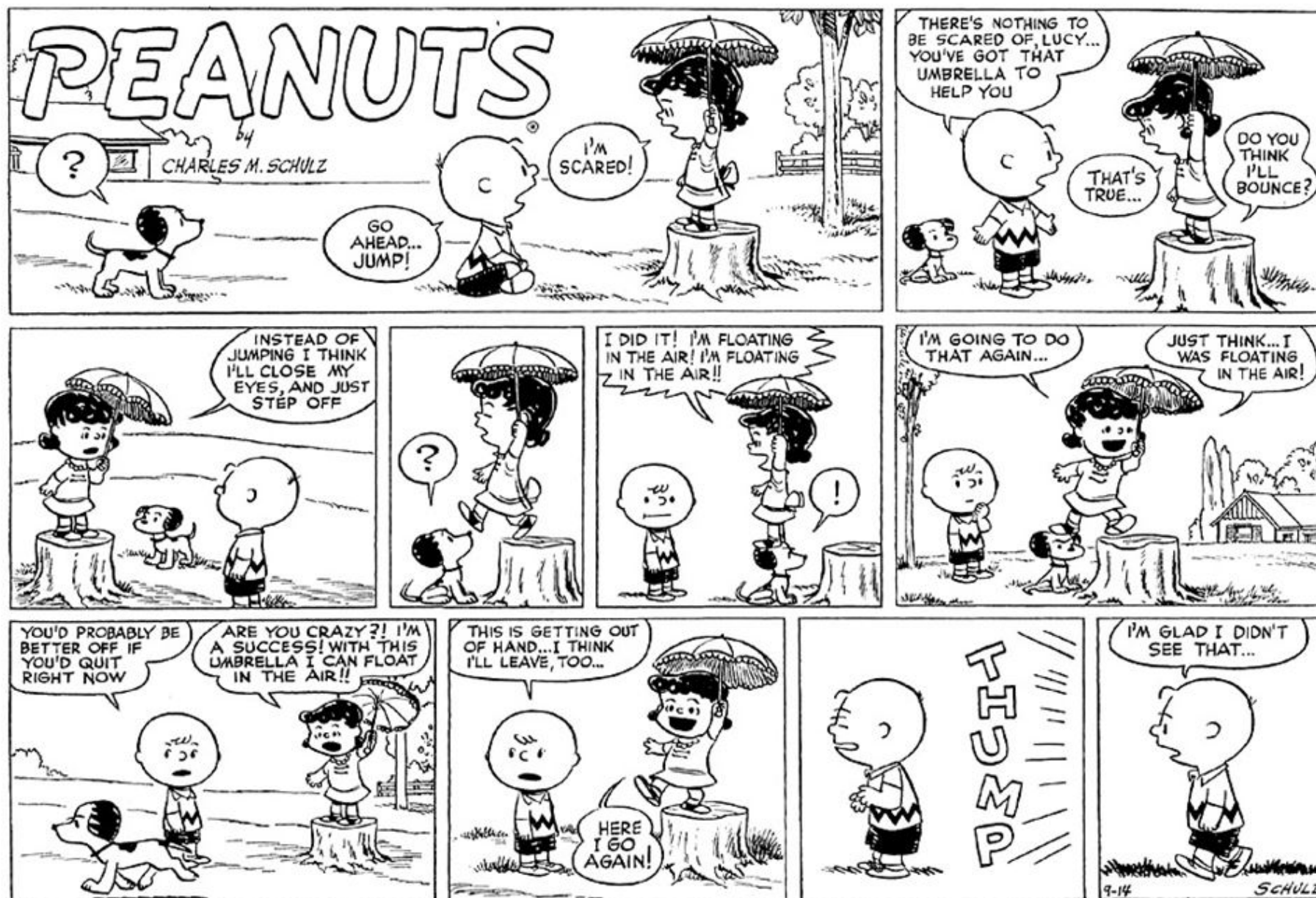


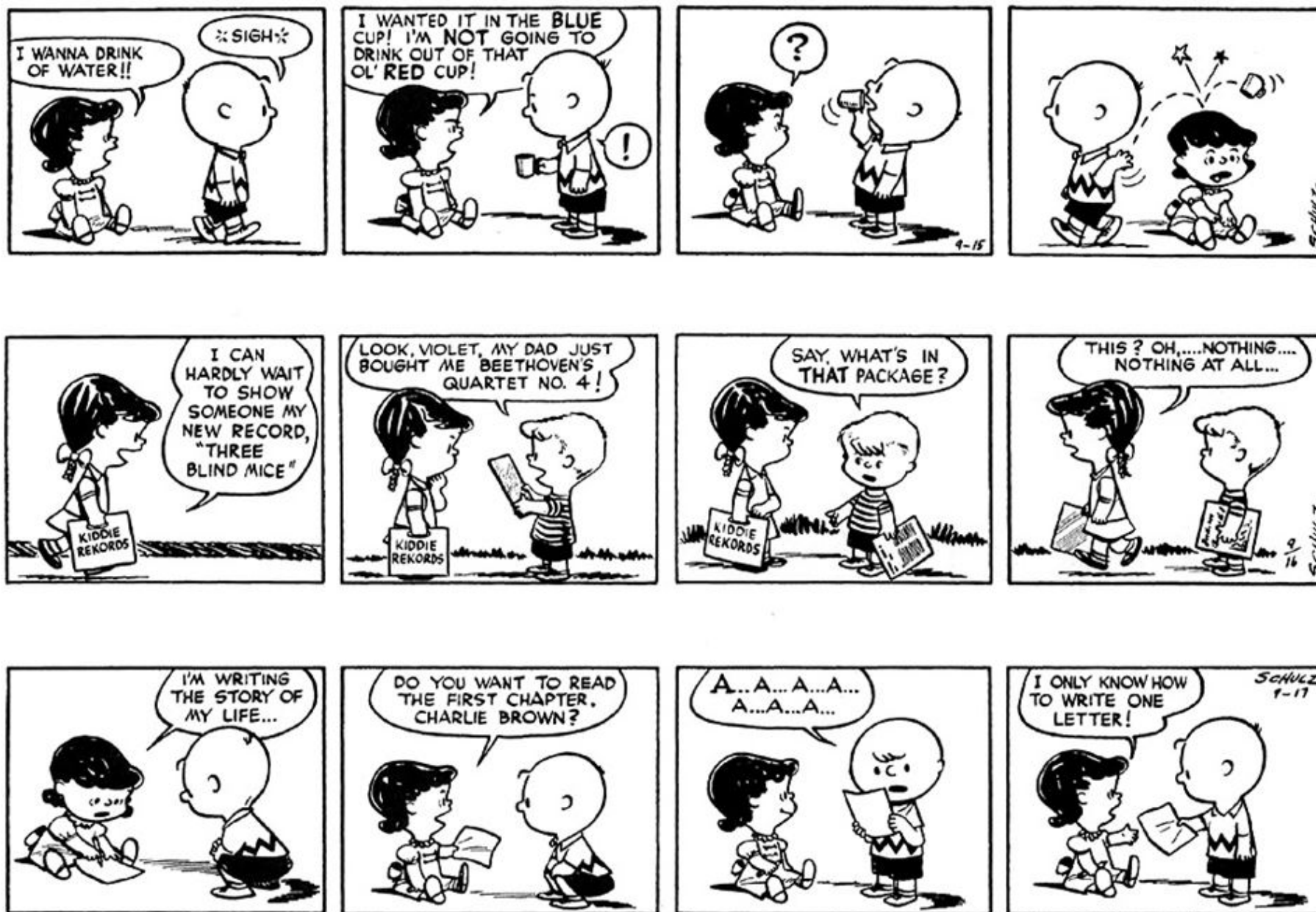


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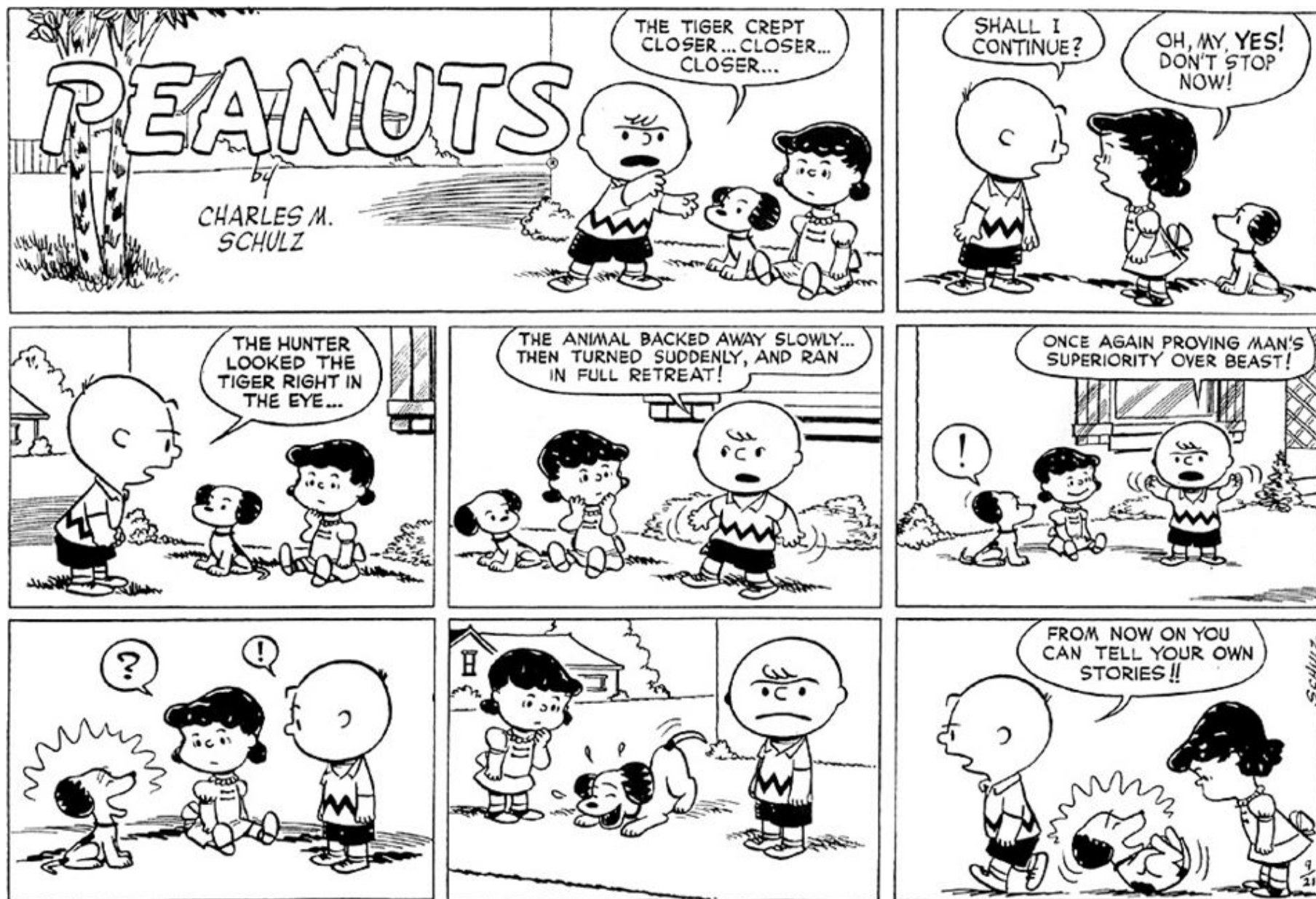






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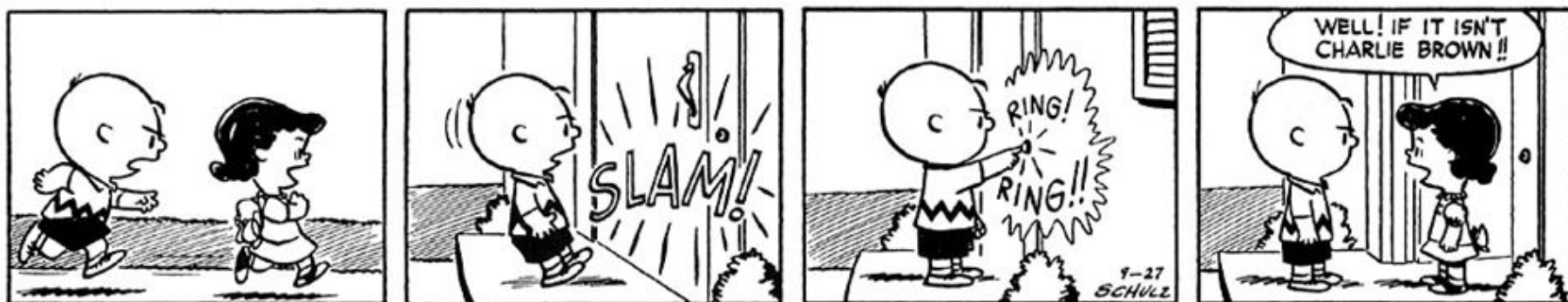
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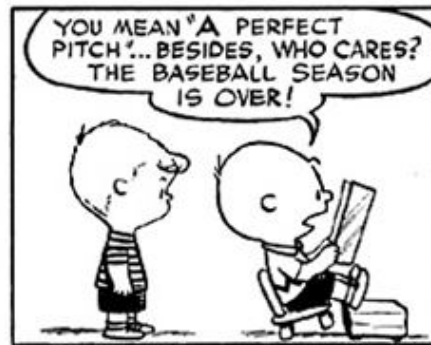
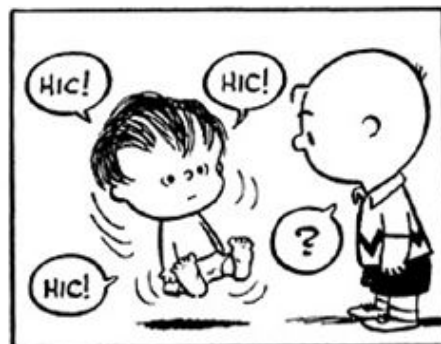


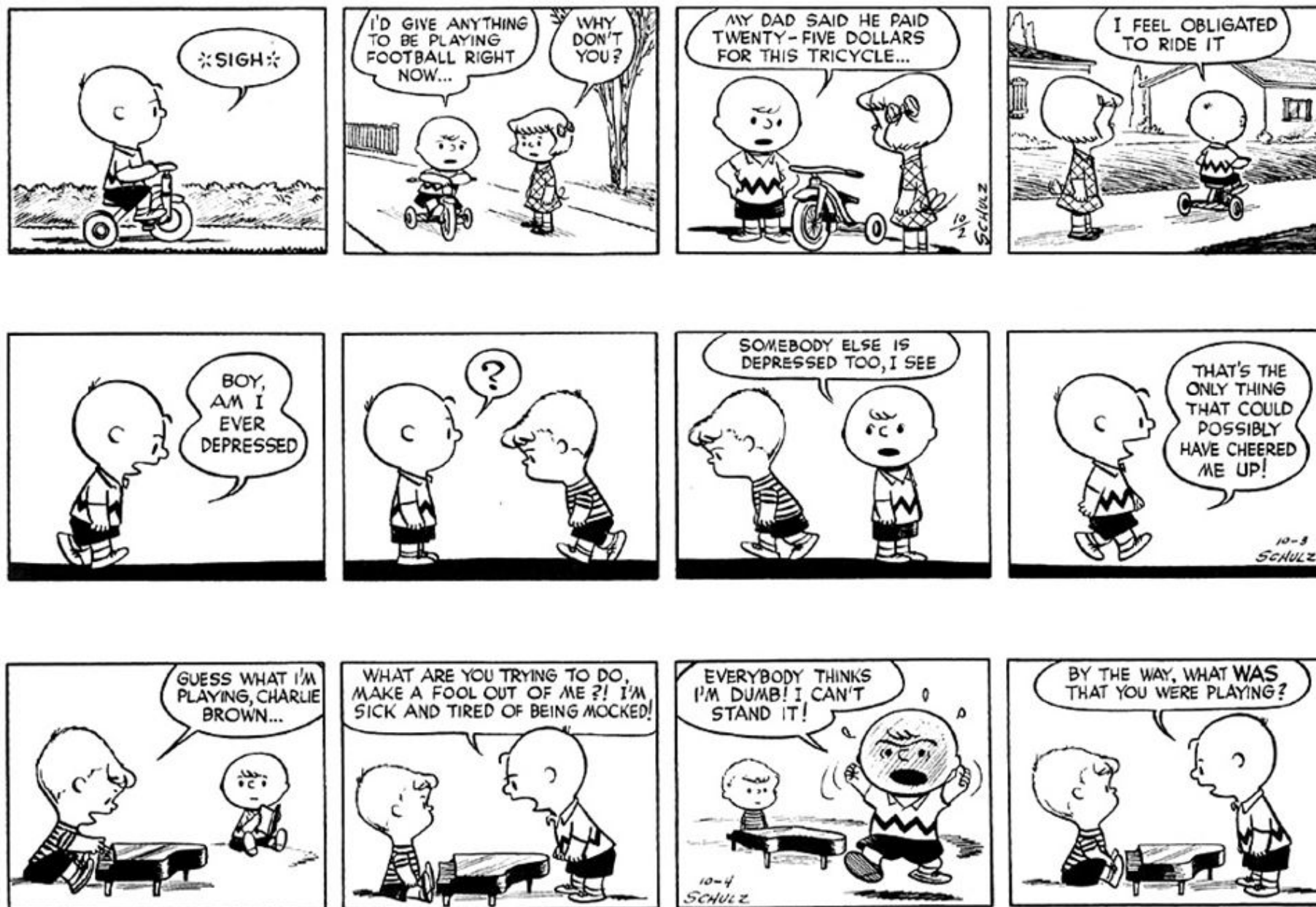
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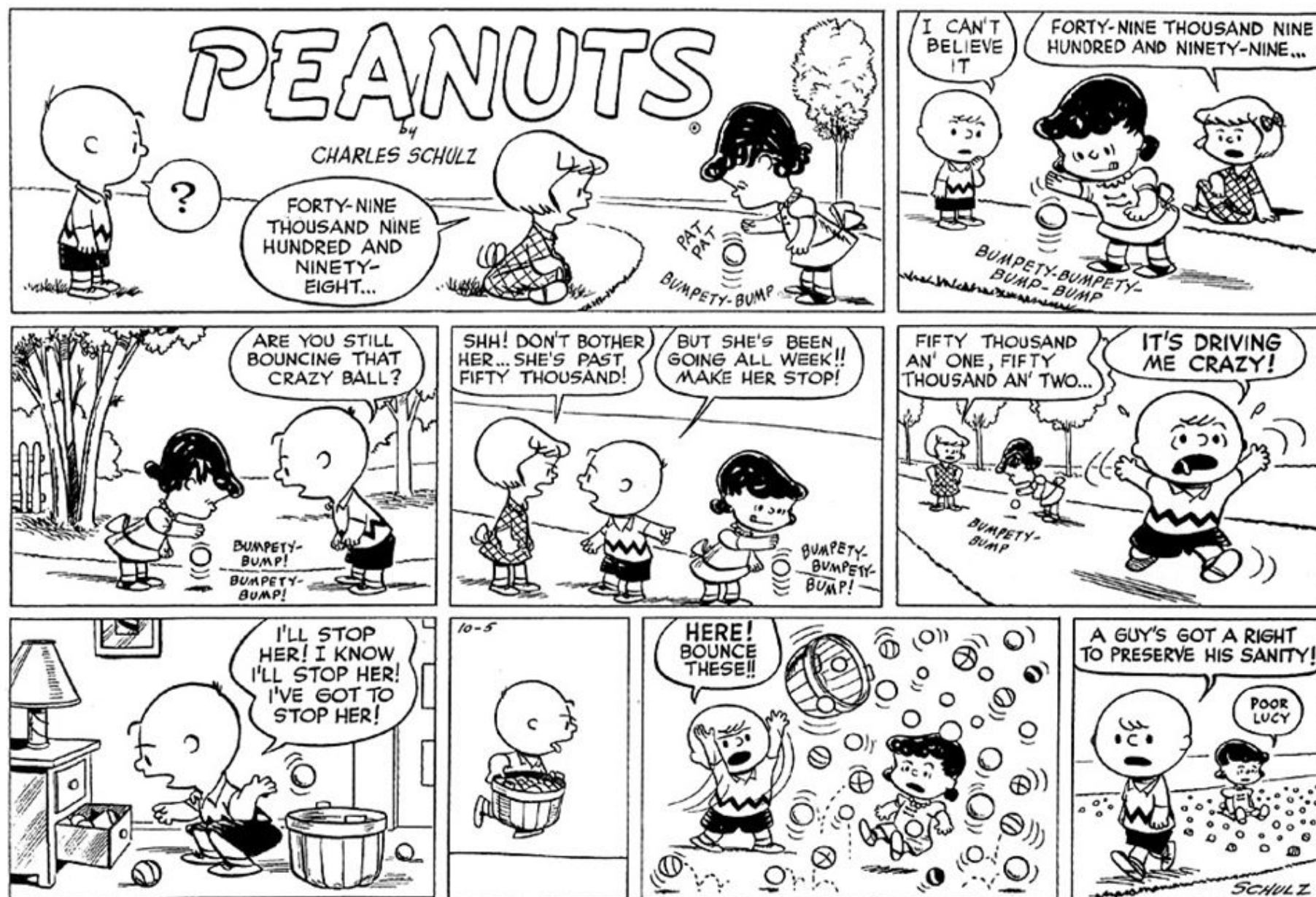






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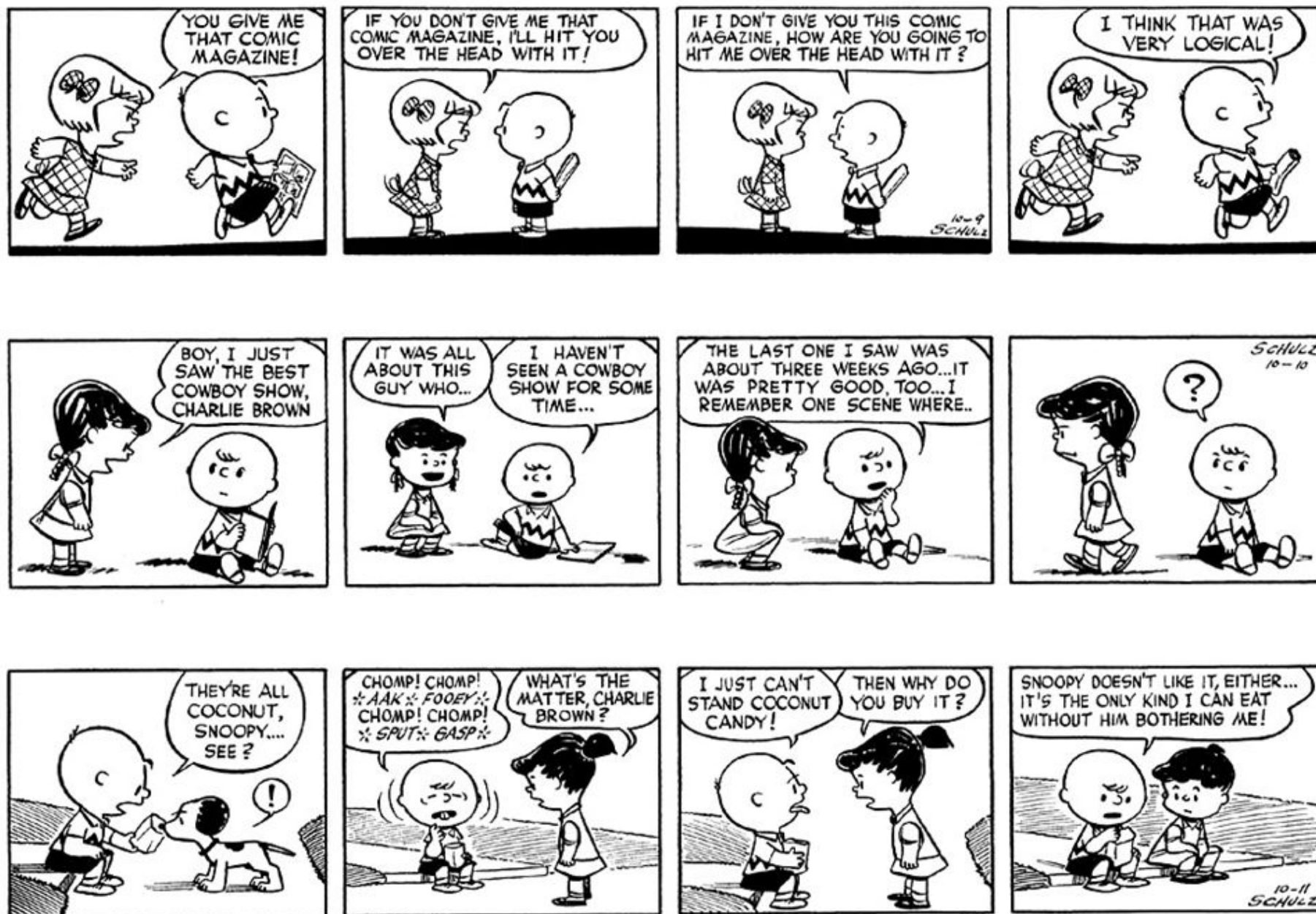
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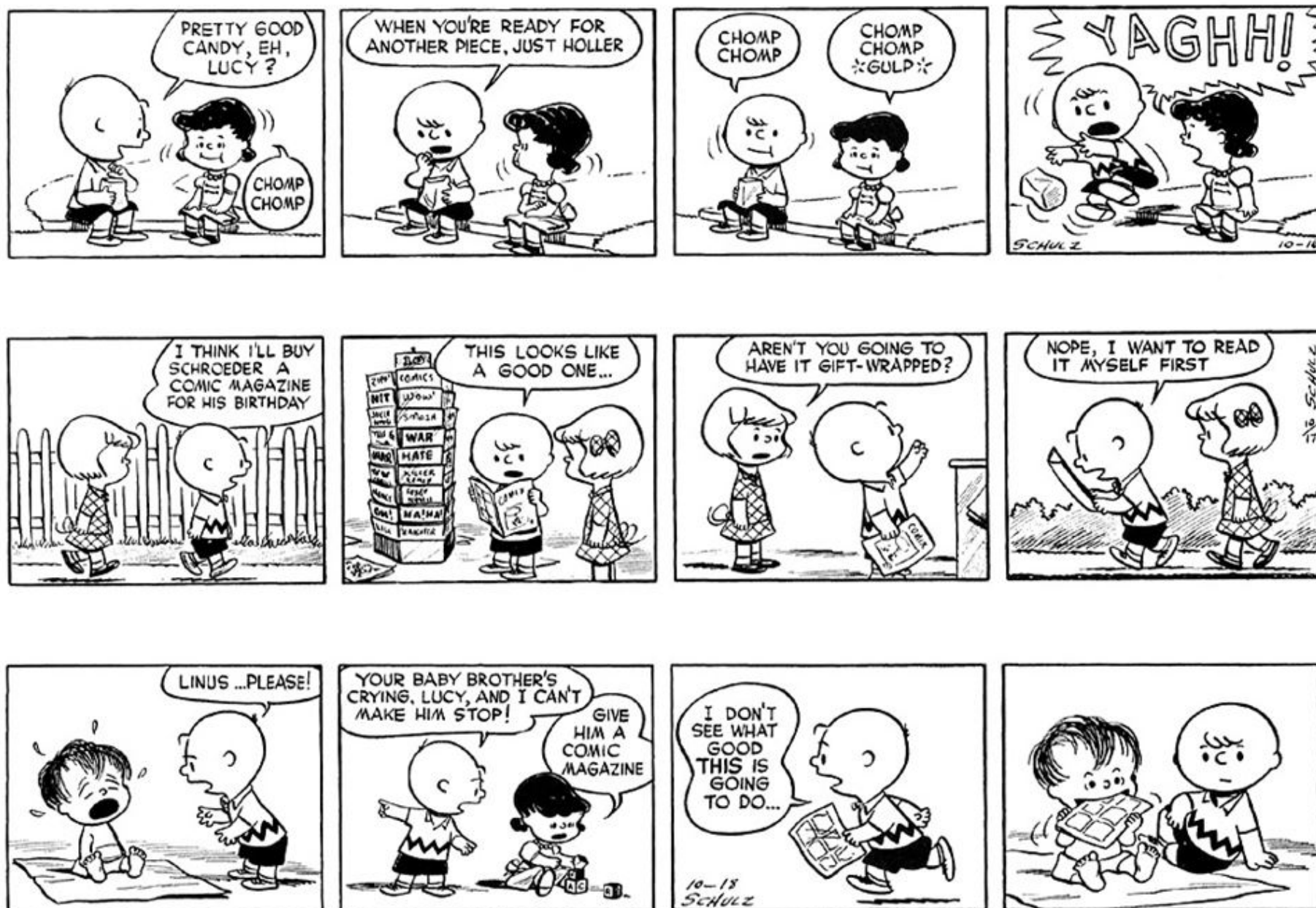
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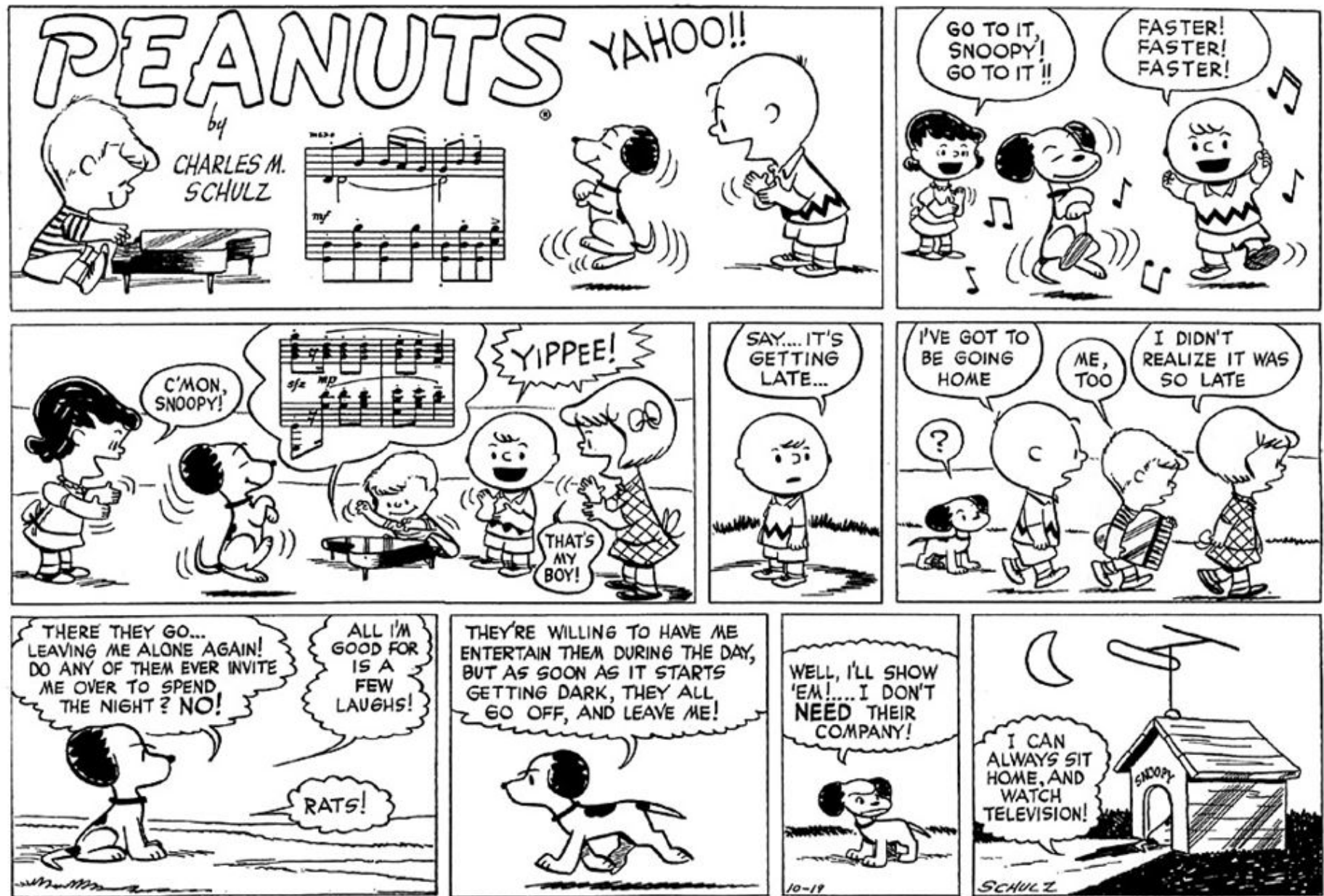
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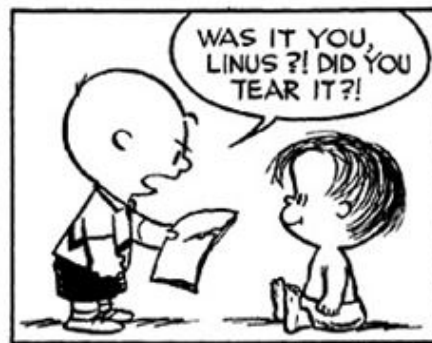












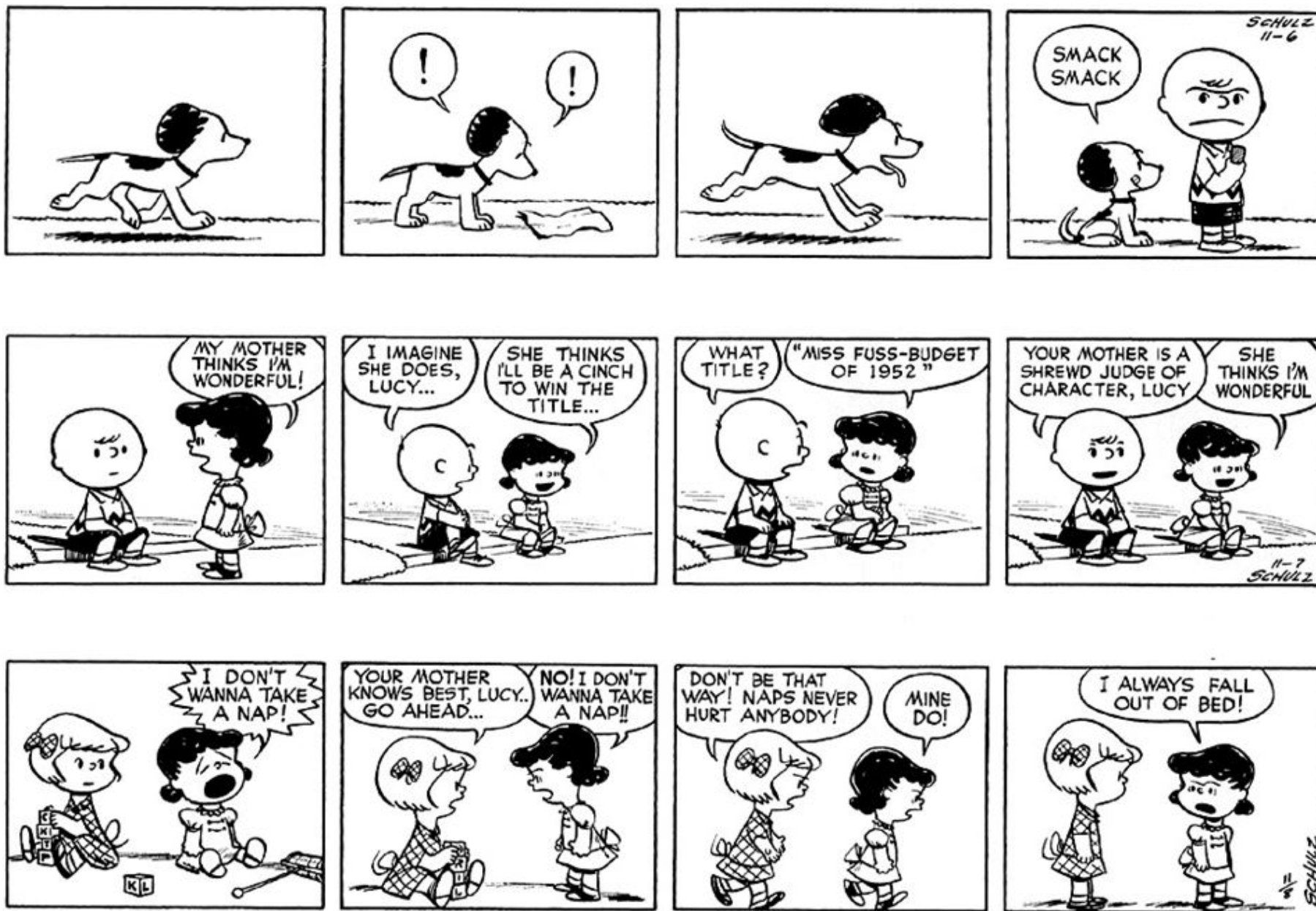


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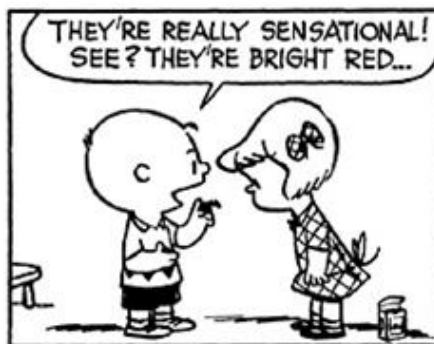


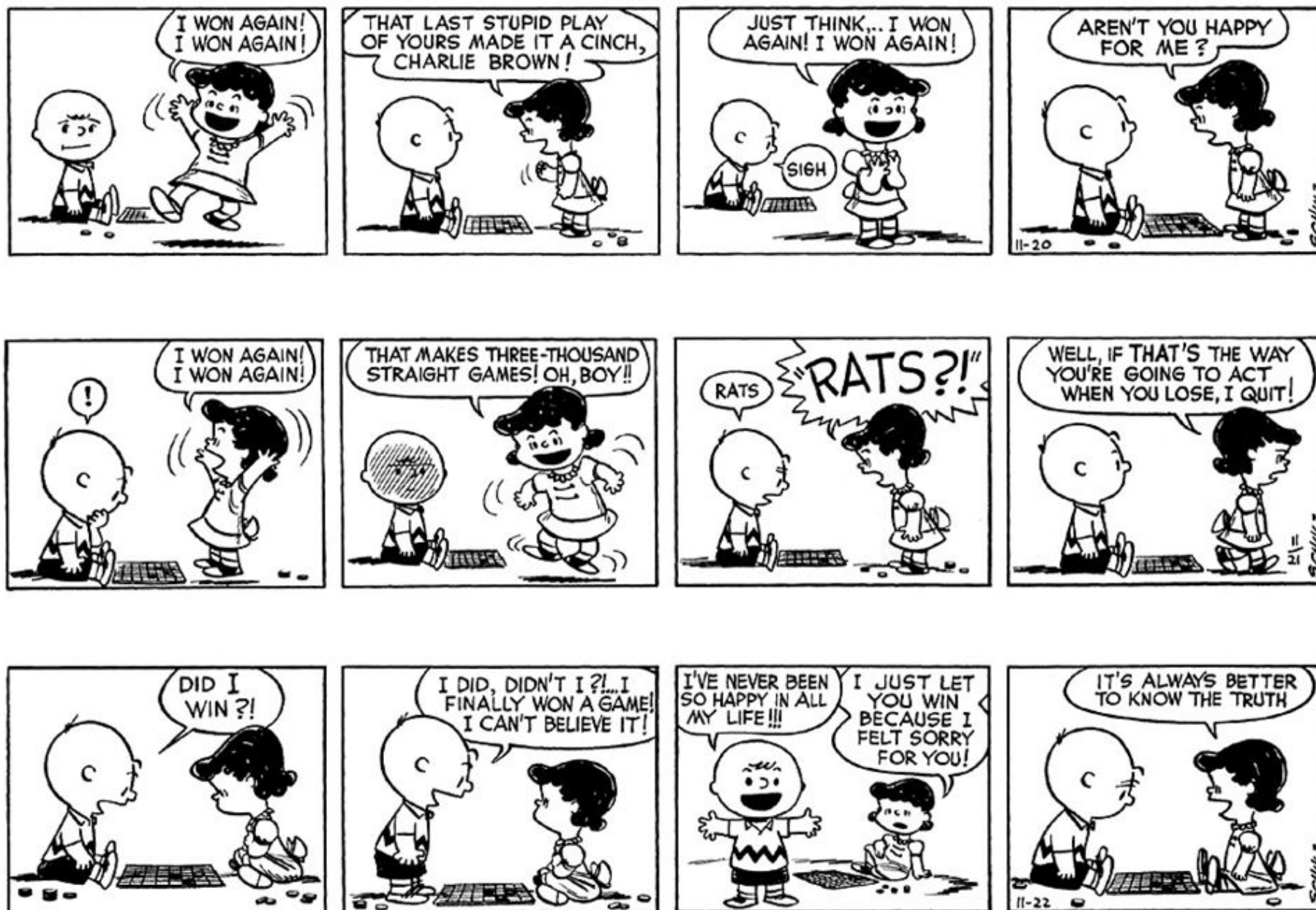












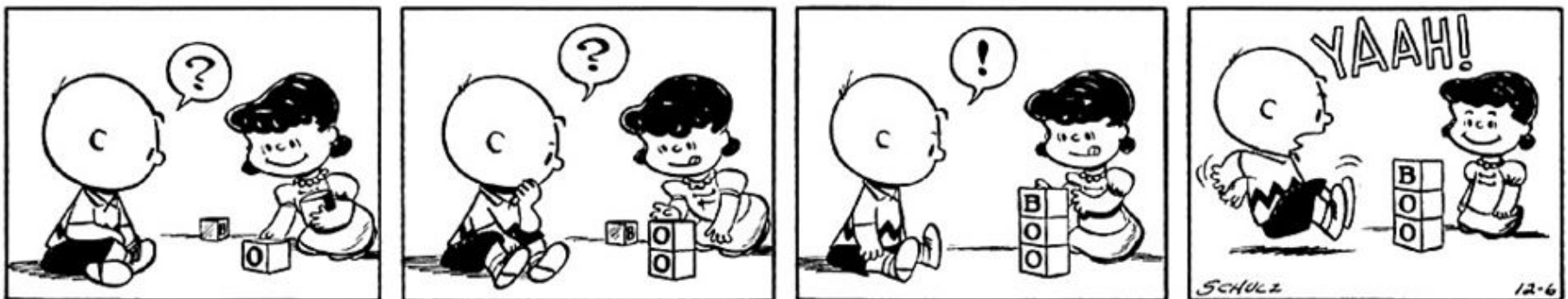














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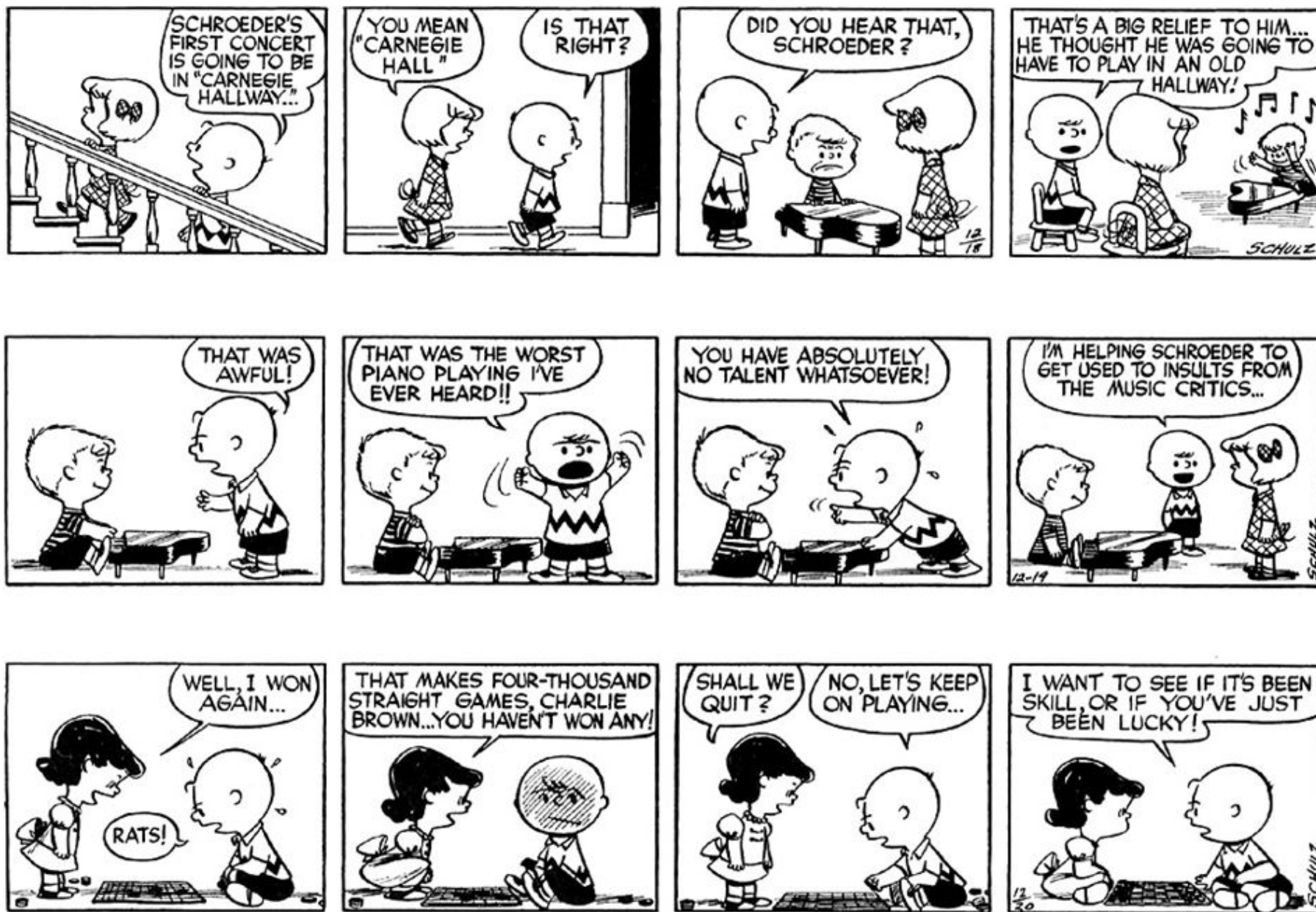


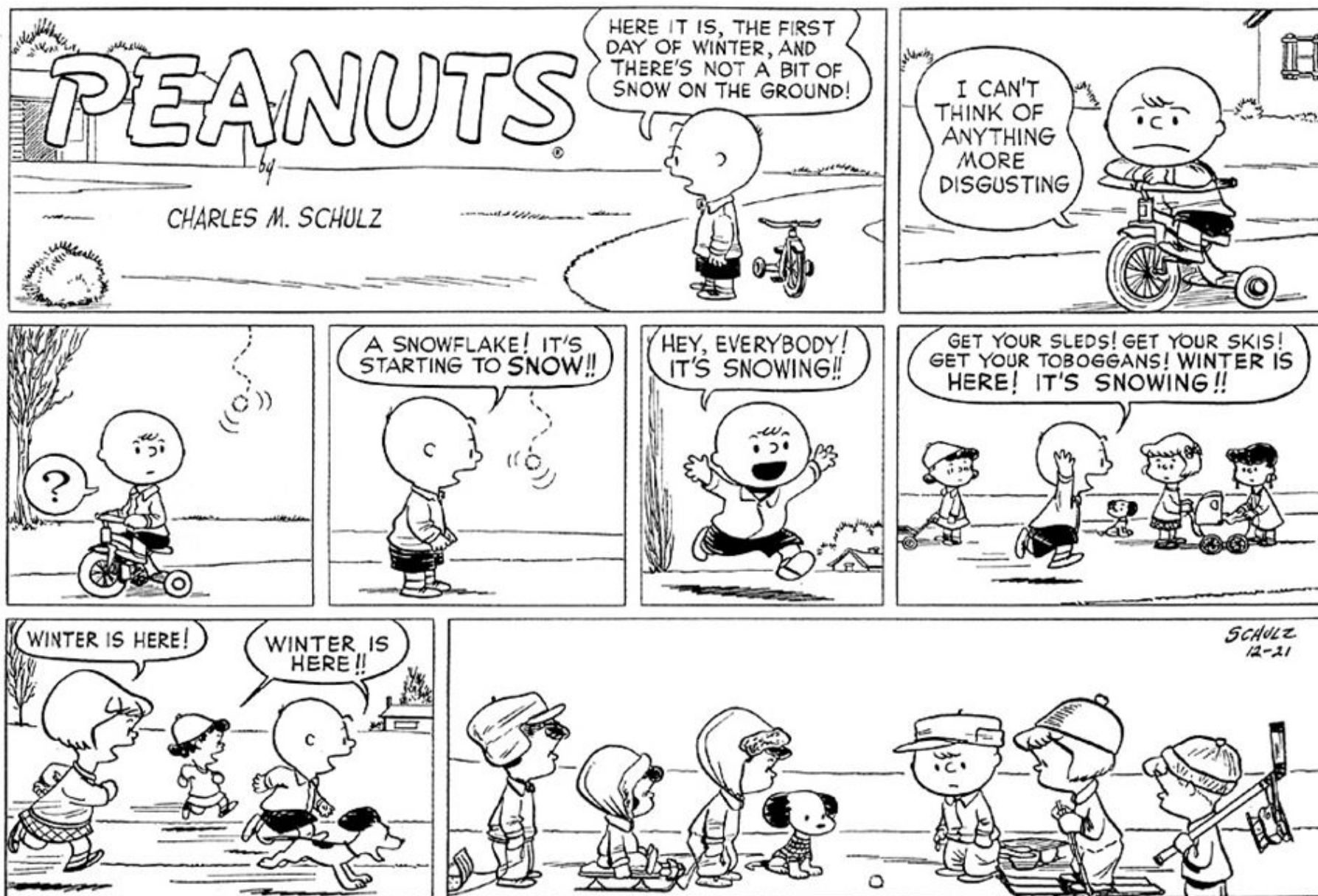


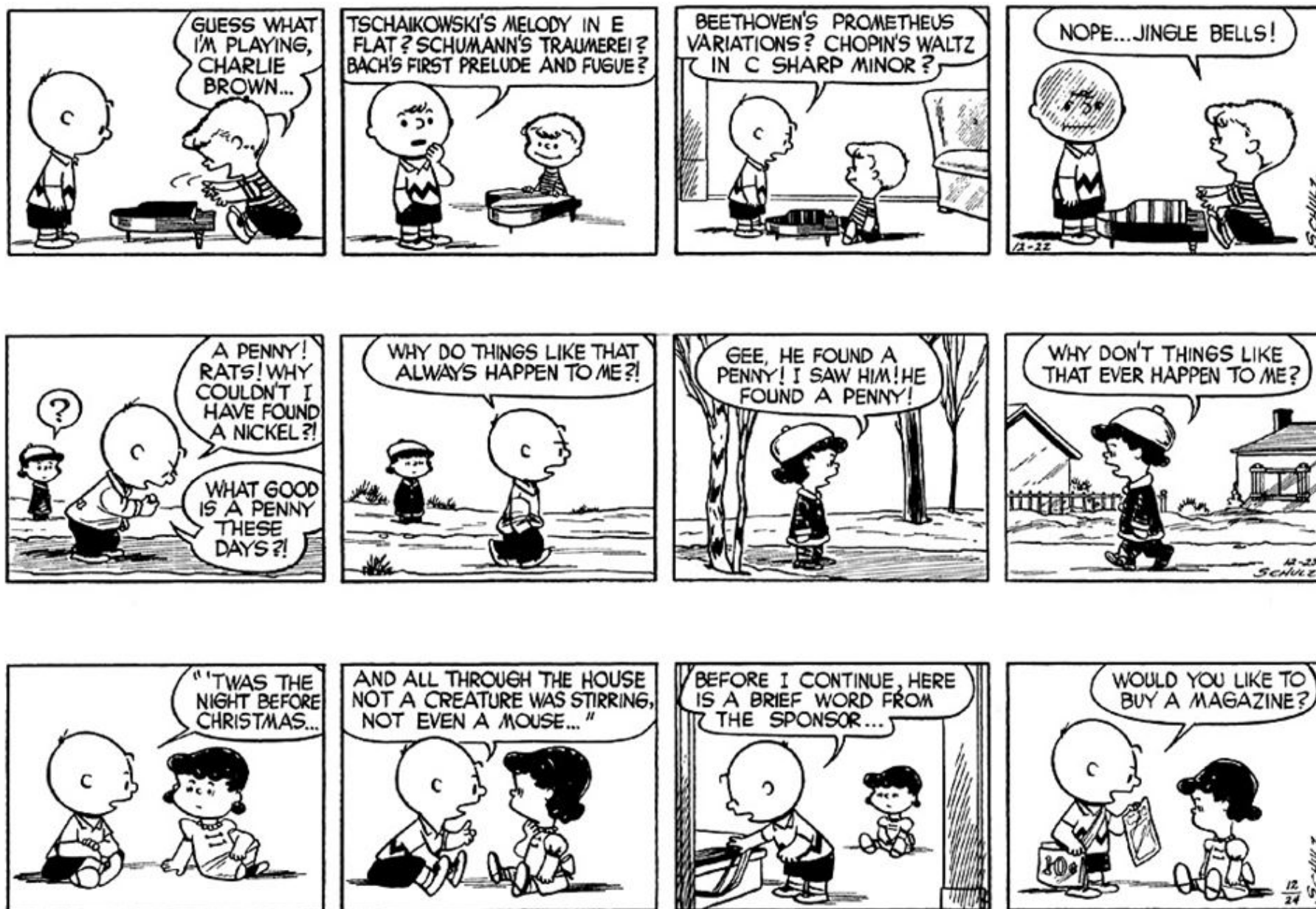


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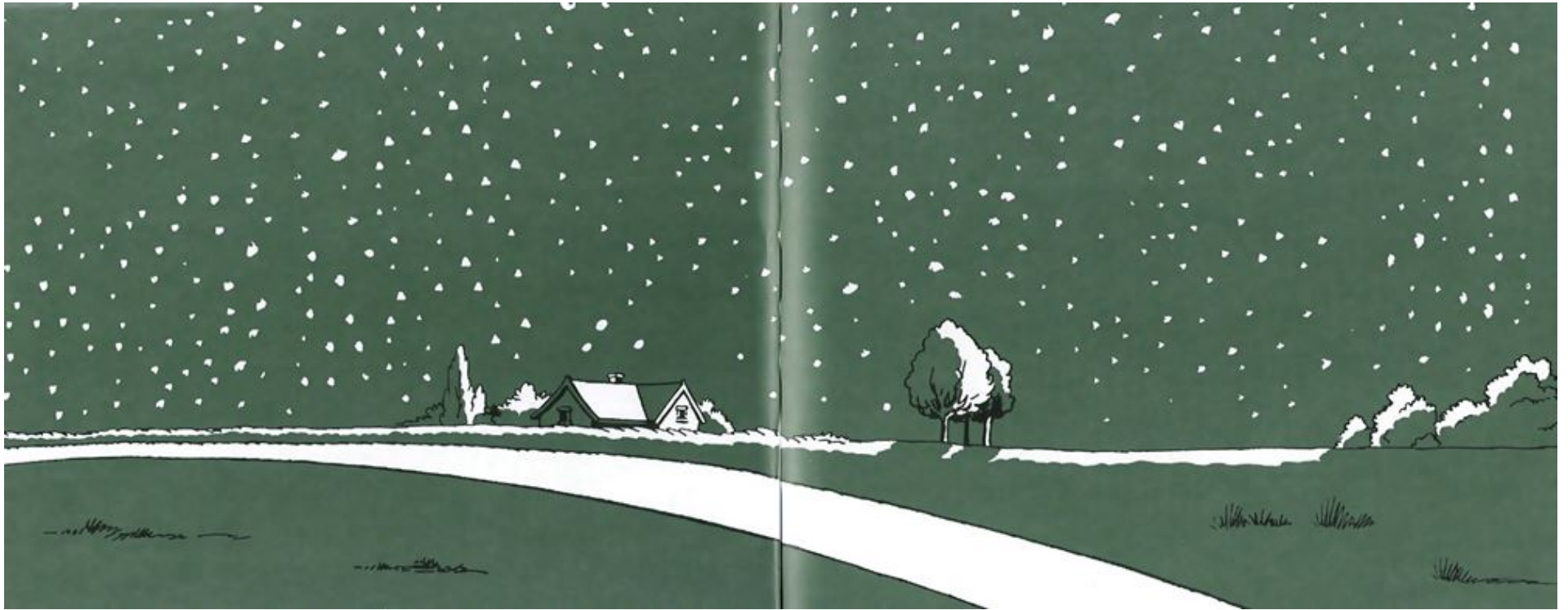




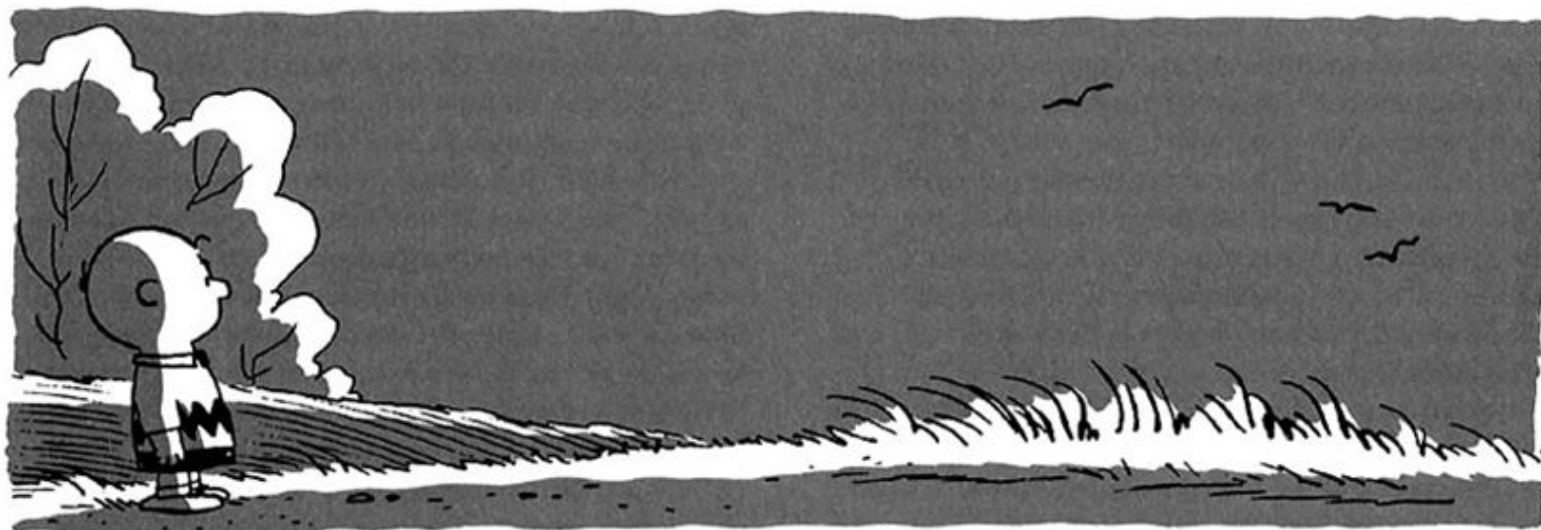
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THE LIFE AND TIMES of CHARLES M. SCHULZ

On October 2, 1950, at the height of the American postwar celebration—an era when being unhappy was an antisocial rather than a personal emotion—a twenty-seven-year-old Minnesota cartoonist named Charles M. Schulz introduced to the funny papers a group of children who told one another the truth:

“I have deep feelings of depression,” a round-faced kid named Charlie Brown said to an imperious girl named Lucy in an early strip. “What can I do about it?”

BY DAVID
MICHAELIS

“Snap out of it,” advised Lucy. This was something new in the newspaper comic strip. At mid-century the comics were dominated by action and adventure, vaudeville and melodrama, slapstick and gags. Schulz dared to use his own quirks—a lifelong sense of alienation, insecurity, and inferiority—to draw the real feelings of his life and time. He brought a spare pen line, exquisite drawing, Jack Benny timing, and a subtle sense of humor to taboo themes such as faith, intolerance, depression, and despair. His characters

were contemplative. They spoke with simplicity and force. They made smart observations about literature, art, classical music, theology, medicine, psychiatry, sports, and the law.

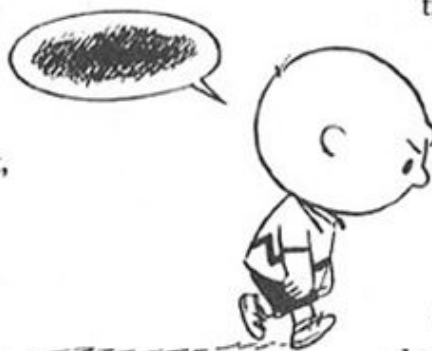
They explained America the way *Huckleberry Finn* does: Americans believe in friendship, in community, in fairness, but in the end, we are dominated by our apartness, our individual isolation—an isolation that went very deep, both in Schulz and in his characters.

A lifelong student of the American comic strip, Schulz knew the universal power of varying a few basic themes. He said things clearly. He recognized the phenomenal number of small things to which the big questions can be reduced. He distilled human emotion to its essence. In a few tiny lines—a circle, a dash, a loop, and two black spots—he could tell anyone in the world what a character was feeling. He was a master at portraying emotion, and took a simple approach to character development, assigning to each figure in the strip one or two memorable traits and problems, often highly comic, which he reprised whenever the character reappeared.

Charlie Brown was something new in comics: a real person, with a real psyche and real problems. The reader knew him, knew his fears, sympathized with his sense of inferiority and alienation.

When Charlie Brown first confessed, “I don’t feel the way I’m supposed to feel,” he was speaking for people everywhere in Eisenhower’s America, especially for a generation of solemn, precociously cynical college students, who “inhabited a shadow area within the culture,” the writer Frank Conroy recalled. They were the last generation to grow up, as Schulz had, without television, and they read Charlie Brown’s utterances as existential statements—comic strip koans about the human condition.

For the first time in panel cartoons, characters spoke, as novelist and semiotics professor Umberto Eco noted, “in two different keys.” The *Peanuts* characters conversed in plain language and at the same time questioned the meaning of life itself. They were energized by a sense of the wrongness of things. The cruelty that exists among children was one of Schulz’s first overt themes. Even Charlie Brown himself played the heavy at the start; in a 1951 strip, after prankishly insulting Patty to her face (“You don’t look so hot to me”), Charlie Brown scampers away, relishing the trickster’s leftovers: “I get my laughs!” But instead of merely depicting children tormenting each other, the cartoonist brilliantly used the theme of happiness—the warm and fuzzy happiness of puppies—as a stalking horse for the wrongness of things.



Peanuts depicted genuine pain and loss but somehow, as the cartoonist Art Spiegelman observed, “still kept everything warm and fuzzy.” By fusing adult ideas with a world of small children, Schulz reminded us that although childhood wounds remain fresh, we have the power as adults to heal ourselves with humor. If we can laugh at the daily struggles of a bunch of funny-looking kids and in their worries recognize the adults we’ve become, we can free ourselves. This alchemy was the magic in Schulz’s work, the alloy that fused the Before and After elements of his own life, and it remains the singular achievement of his strip, the source of its universal power, without which *Peanuts* would have come and gone in a flash.

It’s hard to remember now, when Snoopy and Charlie Brown dominate the blimps at golf tournaments instead of the comics in Sunday papers, that once upon a time Schulz’s strip was the fault-line of a cultural earthquake. Garry Trudeau, creator of *Doonesbury*, who came of age as a comic strip artist under Schulz’s influence, thought of it as “the first Beat strip.” Edgy, unpredictable, ahead of its time, *Peanuts* “vibrated with ’50s alienation,” Trudeau recalled. “Everything about it was different.”

A generation before *Peanuts*, the comics parodied the world. Schulz made a world. He lured mainstream



newspaper comics readers into a dystopia of cruelty and disappointment and hurt feelings. His characters demonstrated daily that we are all, closely examined, a bit peculiar, a little lonely, a lot lost in a lonely universe; and being aware of that and living with it is life’s daily test.

“Nobody was saying this stuff, and it was the truth,” said Jules Feiffer, whose drawings in the late ’50s, like Schulz’s, were steeped in a new humor of truth called “egghead” humor. “Nobody was doing this stuff. You didn’t find it in *The New Yorker*. You found it in cellar clubs; and, on occasion, in the pages of the *Village Voice*. But not many other places. And then, with *Peanuts*, there it was on the comics page.”

Feiffer, the melancholy Jewish intellectual striking at the heart of life as we knew it, saw in Schulz a fellow subversive. Their styles and audience could not have been more different. Feiffer aimed for an elite, urban audience; Schulz was drawing for everyone everywhere. But their territory overlapped. In a Feiffer cartoon of the late ’50s, a teenager enumerates the horror of middle age: getting stuck in a marriage, living in the suburbs, dying of boredom. A man confronts the teenager: “Why don’t you just grow up?” The teenager replies: “For our generation a refusal to grow up is a sign of maturity.” That was the message of *Peanuts*,

too. Schulz was drawing the “inner child” many years before the concept emerged in the popular culture.

The *Peanuts* gang was appealing but also strange. Were they children or adults? Or some kind of hybrid? What would push real children to the breaking point, Charlie Brown handled admirably and without self-pity or self-congratulation. What would reduce children to tears in the real world was routinely endured in *Peanuts*.

In their early years, the characters were volatile, combustible. They were angry. “How I hate him!” was the very first punch line in *Peanuts*. Charlie Brown and his friends could be, as the cartoonist Al Capp said, “mean little bastards, eager to hurt each other.” In *Peanuts*, there was always the chance that the rage of one character would suddenly bowl over another, literally spinning the victim backward and out of frame. Coming home to relax, Charlie Brown sits down to a radio broadcast whose suave announcer is saying, “And what, in all this world, is more delightful than the gay wonderful laughter of little children?” Charlie Brown stands, sets his jaw, and kicks the radio set clear out of the room. Here was a comic strip hero, who, unlike his predecessors Li'l Abner, Dick Tracy, Joe Palooka, or Little Orphan Annie, could take the

restrained fury of the '50s and translate it into a harbinger of '60s activism.

On the one hand, the action in *Peanuts* conveyed an American sense that things could be changed, or at least modified, by sudden violence. By getting good and mad you could resolve things. But, on the other hand, Charlie Brown reminded people, as no other cartoon character had, of what it was to be vulnerable, to be human. He was even, for a time in the '50s, called the “youngest existentialist,” a term that sent his determinedly unsophisticated creator to the dictionary.

The experience of being an Everyman—a decent, caring person in a hostile world—is essential to Charlie Brown's character, as it was to Charles Schulz's. The quality of fortitude (one of the seven cardinal virtues in Christianity) is at the heart of Charlie Brown. Humanity was created to be strong; yet, to be strong, and still to fail is one of the identifying things that it is to be human. Charlie Brown never quit, which in the end would prove to be a perfect description of Charles Schulz.

Charlie Brown is a fighter, but a fighter in terms of pure endurance, not in terms of working out strategically how he is going to win. He simply endures; he stays longer on the baseball field than all the other



kids. When the field is flooded in a downpour and only the pitcher's mound is above water, he remains. His strategy is simple: hang on. He does not go off, as Ulysses does, to seek and make a newer world. Charlie Brown never makes it new. Snoopy, an animal, makes it new. Snoopy is somehow or other always new. Real imagination is allowed only to the non-human character in Schulz's world. This tells us something: that the children are admirable for their human dignity and their lack of self-pity. Charlie Brown may feel sorry for himself but he gets over it fast. He is ennobled by how well he handles being disappointed. He never cries.

The moment when *Peanuts* became *Peanuts* can probably be marked at several spots on Schulz's 1954 calendar, but nowhere more clearly than Monday, February 1: Charlie Brown is visiting Shermy. He looks on, bereft, as a smiling Shermy, seemingly unaware of Charlie Brown's presence, plays with a model train set whose tracks and junctions and crossings spread so elaborately far and wide in Shermy's family's living room, the railroad's complete dimensions cannot be shown in a single cartoon panel. Charlie Brown pulls on his coat and walks home. Finally, alone in his own living room, Charlie Brown sits down at *his* railroad: a single, closed circle of track, no bigger than a manhole cover.

But there is no anger, no self-pity, no tears—no punch line—just silent acceptance. Here was the moment when Charlie Brown became a national symbol, the Everyman who survives life's slings and arrows simply by surviving himself.

We recognize ourselves in Charlie Brown—in his dignity despite doomed ballgames, his endurance despite a deep awareness of death, his stoicism in the face of life's disasters—because he is willing to admit that just to keep on being Charlie Brown is an exhausting and painful process. "You don't know what it's like to be a barber's son," Charlie Brown tells Schroeder. He remembers how it felt to see tears running down his father's cheeks when his dad read letters in the newspaper attacking barbers for raising the price of a haircut. He recalls how hard his father worked to give his family a respectable life. By the

fourth panel, Charlie Brown is so upset by his memories that he grabs Schroeder's shirt with both hands and screams, "YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE!!!"

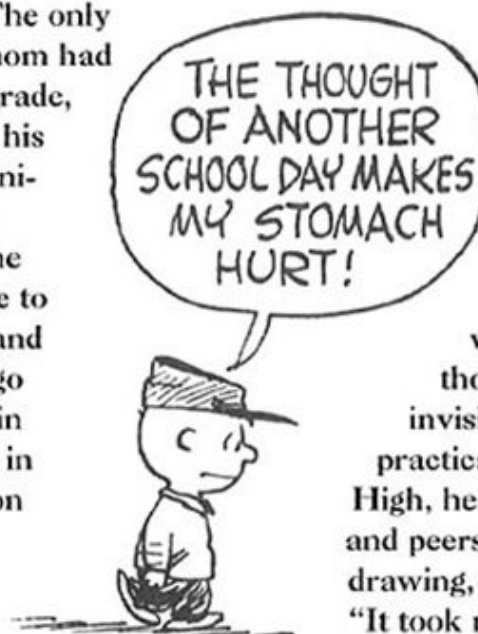


SCHULZ DID. A SHY, TIMID BOY, A barber's son, born on November 26, 1922, "Sparky" Schulz—nicknamed for the horse in *Barney Google*—had grown up from modest beginnings in St Paul, Minnesota, to realize his earliest dream

of creating a newspaper comic strip. The only child of devoted parents, neither of whom had gone further in school than the third grade, Schulz linked the un-sophistication of his childhood home with the ideal of a dignified, ordinary life that he forever after tried to return to. "There are times," he wrote at fifty-eight, "when I would like to go back to the years with my mother and father. It would be great to be able to go into the house where my mother was in the kitchen and my comic books were in the other room, and I could lie down on the couch and read the comics and then have dinner with my parents."

But growing up was a dismaying process for Schulz. He felt chronically unsupported. "He always felt that no one really loved him," a relative recalled. "He knew his mom and dad loved him but he wasn't too sure other people loved him."

His intelligence revealed itself in the second grade. In a class of thirty-one pupils, Charles Schulz was singled out as the outstanding boy student. Two years later, the principal at the Richards Gordon Elementary School in St. Paul skipped Schulz over the fourth grade. By the time he reached junior high school, he was the youngest, smallest boy in the class. He felt lost, unsure of himself. With no one to turn to, he made



loneliness, insecurity, and a stoic acceptance of life's defeats his earliest personal themes. At the same time, he possessed a strong independent streak and grew increasingly stubborn and competitive as life and its injustices, real and imagined, piled up.

As a slight, 136-pound teenager, with pimples, big ears, and a face he thought of as so bland it amounted to invisibility, he had few friends at school. In practically every thing he did at St. Paul Central High, he felt underestimated by teachers, coaches, and peers. No one ever gave him credit for his drawing, or for playing a superior game of golf. "It took me a long time to become a human being," he once said. "I never regarded myself as being much and I never regarded myself as being good looking and I never had a date in high school, because I thought, who'd want to date me?"

Sensitive to slights, he never forgot the rejections of Central High. To the end of his life, he remained baffled that the editors of the *Cehisean*, the Central High yearbook, had rejected a batch of his drawings. At the age of fifty-three, he made sure that a high school report card was printed in facsimile in a collection of his work "to show my own children that I was not as dumb as everyone has said I was." He projected the traumas of his adolescence far into

adulthood—far enough, in the end, to see them become a crucial element in the universal popularity of his art.

Chronic rejection and unrequited love are the twin plinths of Schulz's early life and later work. Even when he had become the one cartoonist known and loved by people around the world, he could still say, with conviction, "My whole life has been one of rejection."

As a young man he suffered deep loss. His mother's wrenching early death from cancer shaped the rest of his life. He was twenty when she died at the age of forty-eight in February 1943. Three days later, a private in the army, he boarded a troop train for Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and the war in Europe. The sense of shock and separation never left him. He survived World War II, as he had survived the Depression and the alienation of his youth, but the only world that had ever mattered to him—the secure home his parents had vouchsafed him—was gone, and for a time he had no hope for the future. His mother's death came to stand not only for her removal from his life, which would have been a cataclysm by itself, but also, because of the war, for Schulz's total separation from childhood and home. He would refer to it as a "loss from which I sometimes believe I never recovered."



Melancholy would dog him all his life, as would feelings of worthlessness, panic, high anxiety, and frustration. It wouldn't matter that he married twice, raised five children, and became the most widely syndicated and beloved cartoonist of all time, attaining success on a scale no individual comic strip artist had ever known. Success fell off him. He was unable to take refuge in its rewards. With his first wife and five children, he moved in 1958 to a paradise among the redwoods of Northern California, where for a decade the work of his pen and the peaks of his professional achievements coincided with the nation's upheavals. But Schulz knew better than anyone that he could never really become a sunny citizen of the Golden State. He found little comfort in fame or prosperity or the California sun. Pain gave him his core. "I think that one of the things that afforded Sparky his greatness," a friend would say after his death, "was his unwillingness to turn his back on the pain."

The private, quiet, depressed, Scandinavian part of Schulz's character was both the quality that made him completely different from any other comic strip artist and the trait that led him to struggle with himself and his creation like the tormented artist in a Henry James novel.

UNTIL 1965, SCHULZ PROVIDED UNCONVENTIONAL commentary in the national margins. He had no interest in taking a stand or in taking sides; his subject was the ordeal of individual experience. And yet *Peanuts* registered social tremors with seismographic accuracy. Schulz *was* topical, constantly illuminating up-to-the-minute questions and personalities: smut and gore in comic books [June 22, 1952]; nuclear testing and the H-Bomb [June 18, 1954]; excessive vigilance by the FBI [Oct. 30, 1956]; hazards of the jet age [Mar. 29, 1959]; Rachel Carson [Nov. 12, 1962; Feb. 19, 1963; Feb. 20, 1963]; the adoption of ZIP codes [Sept. 27, 1963]; prayer in schools [Oct. 20, 1963]; long hair and hippies [July 12, 1967; Nov. 1, 1967]; police brutality [Nov. 2, 1967]; teachers' strikes [Feb. 24, 1969]; Tiny Tim [Sept. 10, 1968]; love bead [Sept. 15, 1968]; the Vietnam War [July 1-9, 1970]; tear-gas at campus protests [July 7, 1970]; the rights of unborn children [July 20, 1970] all found their way into the strip. In *Peanuts*' first three decades of syndication, which happened to coincide with the greatest fomentation of social change in the United States since the Civil War, Schulz was the prevailing voice in mainstream newspaper comics on social change.



Yet he personally remained apart from specific social and political causes, never joining the battle of ideas. He deliberately refused to settle the issues raised by the strip. He never made overt political statements through *Peanuts*. Having established a language that commented on modern ills, Schulz extended the area of doubt in modern life only insofar as he made it funny to doubt. But, as the '60s intensified, as the Vietnam War failed and nothing quite worked out, as the triumphal quality of American life modulated, *Peanuts* became a refuge. Schulz became the patron saint of people who were putting up with all they

could take. Reading the strip was a peculiar

mixture of utter forgetfulness, which created the spell, and at the same time, tremendous consciousness. *Peanuts* was proof that you were not alone when you woke in the middle of the night marooned with your failures, staring into the dark, worrying that the world had gone mad.

From 1965 onward, the strip skyrocketed. When Schulz's "bunch of funny-looking kids" appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in April, *Peanuts* was embraced as the embodiment of the fundamental wisdom of the time. The strip and its characters had gone from being a campus phenomenon in the late '50s to a mainstream cultural powerhouse. Throughout the '60s

and early '70s, the visual and verbal vocabulary of the strip was one of the only languages that kept both the younger and older generation fluent with each other. Schulz's phrase "security blanket," and his ideas about that most American of concepts, happiness, found their way into *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* and *Webster's Dictionary*. The names and subversive attributes of his characters filtered into the counterculture of the '60s; the Grateful Dead's defiantly grubby organist, Ron McKernan, was nicknamed Pig Pen; another San Francisco rock band that formed in 1966 called itself Sopwith Camel. As American soldiers stenciled Snoopy onto their helmets and the Apollo 10 astronauts christened their command module Charlie Brown and their lunar landing vehicle Snoopy, Schulz left his imprimatur on the Cold War's highest and lowest moments—the race to put a man on the moon and the war in Vietnam.

In 1969, as the nation teetered, Schulz soared to previously unknown heights of popular culture. One snowy night that December, when Schulz was forty-seven years old, some fifty-five million viewers, more than half the nation's television audience, tuned in to the Emmy-award-winning animated television special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, the popularity of which confounded network executives who had predicted that its cartoon format, melancholy jazz



score by Vincent Guaraldi, and simple retelling of the Nativity story from the Gospel of Luke would alienate the public. That same night, a musical, *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, was playing to sold-out houses on Broadway; and a feature-length animated film, *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, was setting attendance records at Radio City Music Hall; every few hours, six thousand more parents and children would form a line outside the "showplace of the nation." More than one hundred fifty million newspaper readers were following the daily and Sunday editions of *Peanuts*, while in bookstores *Peanuts* collections swamped the bestseller lists, eventually selling more than three hundred million copies in twenty-six languages.

Peanuts had acquired a life beyond itself. Long-suffering Charlie Brown, exuberant Snoopy, philosophical Linus, domineering Lucy, talented Schroeder, narcoleptic Peppermint Patty became revered figures in Japan, beloved in England, France, Germany, Norway, Italy, and known by sight in seventy-five countries throughout Europe, South America, Africa, Australia, and Asia. The *Times of London* called them "international icons of good faith"—not surprising for the creations of a cartoonist with a Dickensian gift for characterization. As more and more people fit real life into the context of the

comic strip, Charlie Brown and Lucy and Linus and Snoopy acquired an explanatory character as well as a descriptive character. Where Americans in an earlier generation might have analogized themselves to Scrooge or Pip or Little Nell or Miss Havisham or Uriah Heap or Bill Sykes, now the *Peanuts* characters explained people to themselves and provided a widespread idiom for struggles in life and love. At all levels of society *Peanuts* had a profound and lasting influence on the way people saw themselves and the world in the second half of the 20th century.

Schulz's achievement was singular and planetary. An artist, a storyteller, he was now a worldwide industry, too. This had never happened to a newspaper cartoonist before. The new markets that *Peanuts* was dominating in stage, television, film, book, record, and subsidiary forms, simply hadn't been open to newspaper comic strip artists in 1950, when United Media had given Schulz the chance to dream his dream. On that one night in 1969, he reached a larger, more diverse audience than any other single popular artist in American history. What was more, *Peanuts* was single-handedly expanding an industry that would revolutionize worldwide entertainment into the next century. In the late '60s, for the first time in the book trade, booksellers started to sell not just *Peanuts*

books but also sweatshirts, dolls, and an increasing array of paraphernalia that bore the image and form of the characters in the books—an old idea called “licensing” that *Peanuts* products would turn into a global phenomenon.

USING A CROW-QUILL PEN DIPPED IN INK, SCHULZ drew every day through the next three decades. He always worked alone, without a team of assistants. For a self-doubting perfectionist—Schulz referred to himself as a fanatic—the strip cartoon was an ideal form: the cartoonist's relationship to the world is self-limiting. The strip cartoonist can get up, go to work, draw his daily panels, and go to bed at night feeling he's done his bit. At the same time, Schulz had a conflicted sense of duty. The unprecedented obligations of his new role as world-famous cartoonist kept him in a state of constant anxiety and dread. He loved to be asked to go places and do good things and receive prestigious honors, but he hated to leave home and routine. He felt he should meet people and see the world, but he was increasingly phobic about travel. He panicked as he boarded airplanes, broke out in a cold sweat at the very idea of spending the night away from home. Safely at work in his studio, he loved receiving fan letters by the hundreds but resented the demands on



his time. Perhaps because he refused so many requests for public appearances, he was unfailingly openhanded in his correspondence, answering scores of letters and special requests from strangers each day.

The condolences that flooded Schulz's office after news of his retirement from *Peanuts* and then crested over into his household after his death are dominated by a single refrain: *The handwritten response I received from Charles Schulz at a critical moment in my development changed forever the course of my life.* He influenced two generations of comic strip artists, standup comedians, and readers everywhere. But unlike other seminal figures of American mass culture in the 1960s and '70s—Marshall McLuhan, Buckminster Fuller, Andy Warhol—Schulz had no itch to be a teacher, a guru, a manufacturer of lesser artists. “I don’t know the meaning of life,” he once said. “I don’t know why we are here. I think life is full of anxieties and fears and tears. It has a lot of grief in it, and it can be very grim. And I do not want to be the one who tries to tell somebody else what life is all about. To me it’s a complete mystery.”

He wanted only to operate from the extreme bottom right-hand corner of his own panels—where

it said “Schulz.” He wanted to limit himself to being that little scribble. If he could draw his four panels a day, sign himself “Schulz,” close up shop and go home, all would be well.

Charles M. Schulz became highest-paid, most influential cartoonist ever. The only modern

American comic strip artist to be given a retrospective at the Louvre, he was now in a class by himself. His characters cut a broad path across commerce and culture; Charlie Brown and Snoopy could go from being cartoon pitchmen for cars and life insurance, their huge heads and tiny bodies stretched across blimps at golf tournaments, to being the inspiration for a *Peanuts* concerto by contemporary composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, premiering at Carnegie Hall.

At the peak of Schulz's popularity, *Peanuts* captured three hundred and fifty-five million readers, and the merchandising of the brand created a franchise unlike any the funny papers had ever known, with the cartoonist himself earning from \$30 million to \$40 million a year.

He kept on drawing as he always had—17,897 strips by the end. He often said, “My main job is to



draw funny comic strips for the newspapers." He didn't set himself up as a chaplain or philosopher or therapist to the millions. He made no statements about important issues. He sat on no commissions. He went straight on with his work, even though the world begged him to change from being a commentator for a minor constituency in the 1950s to a national observer who had a great deal to say to the world at large. He wanted to be no different than anyone else.

As part of his morning routine, he ate an English muffin with grape jelly and drank coffee from a Styrofoam cup, then sat down to his drawing table and the long, white Strathmore board with the five-inch by five-inch panels in which he drew the daily strip. "He attempted to be ordinary," said Clark Gesner, author of the musical *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. He wanted to be what he thought he had always been—a regular person.

In later life, Schulz joked that he looked like a druggist. Genial, smiling, with straight white teeth and a head of silver hair, he dressed modestly in slacks and pastel golf sweaters. He stood a trim five feet eleven and a half inches and liked to sprawl after work in a big blue leather easy chair, his long legs pointing straight at the TV set. "People say 'Where do you get your ideas?'" he once recalled, "because they look at



me and they think, surely this man could never think of anything funny." But smiling silver-haired druggists know the town pretty well. They have the common touch, they dispense daily doses of medicine to the melancholy people of Mudville, and they are the last to have illusions about what's really happening in people's lives.

He dreaded becoming a prisoner of success, perhaps because it meant he would lose control. "I don't want to attract attention," he said in 1981. "I've always had the fear of being ostentatious—of people thinking that these things have gone to my head." He didn't have any experience being a millionaire or a celebrity. He wanted to be free. When reporters came around asking questions about his success, he would reply, "Have I had enormous success? Do you think so?" He hated to talk about it. In 1967, he hotly told a writer, "*Life* magazine said I was a multimillionaire—heck, no cartoonist can become a millionaire."

Into the 1980s and 1990s, his fortune mushroomed. *Forbes* magazine regularly listed Schulz among the top-ten highest-paid entertainers in the United States, along with Bill Cosby, Michael Jordan, and Michael Jackson. He took little interest in accumulating money, gave millions away to charities, insisting always that he was the same old Sparky Schulz. At his drawing table in his studio at One Snoopy

Place in Santa Rosa, he drew with the same old pens, the same old nibs. He liked to say that he would stay at the desk until he wore a hole clean through it.

Schulz took professional pride in the achievements of the strip. But pride in one's work does not automatically override years of early disappointments to create pride in one's self, and Schulz struggled to the end of his life to believe that he himself was worthy of the respect and love his admirers showered on him. "It is amazing that they think that what I do was that good," he said in one of the last interviews of his life. His voice quavered and he seemed as if he might break down when he said: "I just did the best I could."

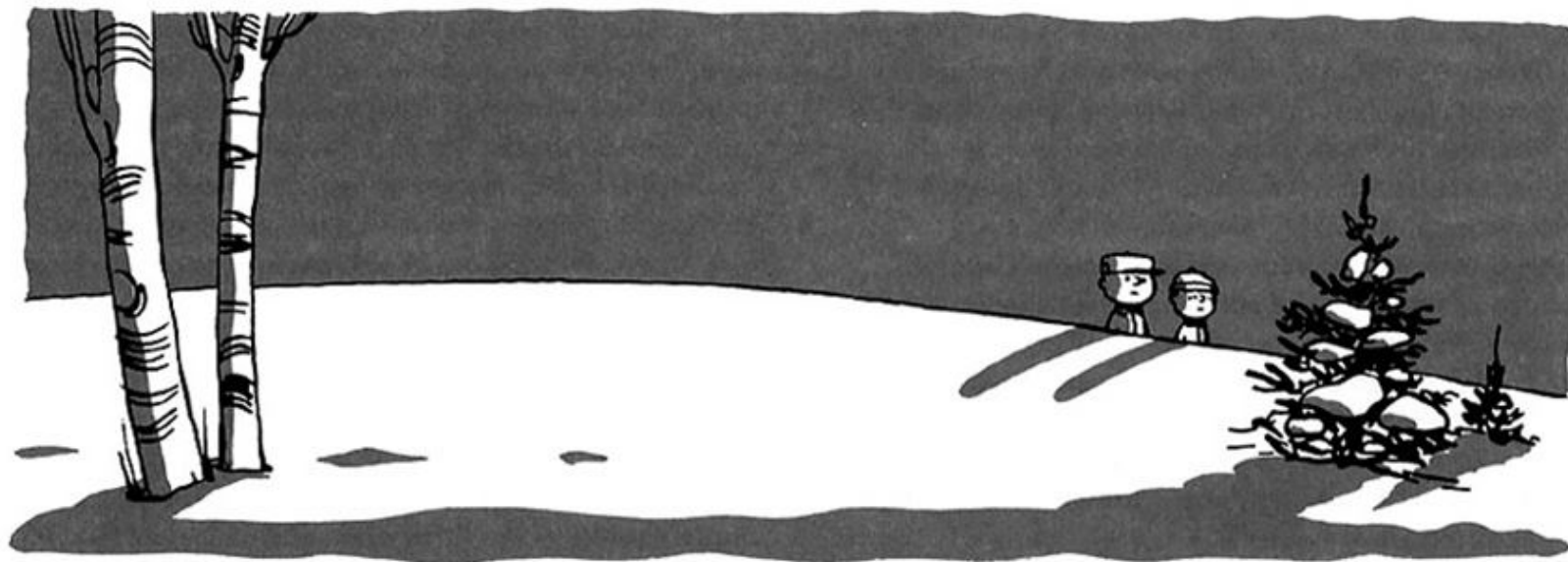
In November 1999, after a stroke put him into the hospital, doctors discovered that colon cancer had metastasized to his stomach. He had an operation to remove the cancer, and the doctors got most of it, but the stroke and the surgery robbed Schulz of the will to go on drawing. He couldn't see clearly, he couldn't read. He struggled to recall the words he needed. But all that might have been tolerable except that chemotherapy had begun to make him sick to his stomach, and the statistics for Stage-Four colon cancer gave him a slim twenty percent chance to live.



On December 14, 1999, at the age of seventy-seven, Schulz announced his retirement. "I never dreamed that this would happen to me," he said. "I always had the feeling that I would stay with the strip until I was in my early eighties, or something like that. But all of sudden it's gone. It's been taken away from me. I did not take it away," he emphasized. "This was taken away from me."

After nearly fifty years of drawing *Peanuts*, the world-famous cartoonist put down his pen in January, his vision blurred. Being a comic strip artist was all he had ever wanted. On February 12, 2000, a dark night of pouring rain in Santa Rosa, California, Schulz got into bed a little after nine o'clock. He pulled up the covers. At 9:45 p.m., just hours before the final *Peanuts* strip appeared in Sunday newspapers around the world, Charles Schulz died—his life entwined to the very end with his art. As soon as he ceased to be a cartoonist, he ceased to be.

David Michaelis, author of *N. C. Wyeth: A Biography* (Knopf, 1998), is writing the first full-scale biography of Charles M. Schulz.



AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES M. SCHULZ

T*his interview with Charles Schulz was conducted in late 1987 in Schulz's studio in Santa Rosa, California. It originally appeared in NEMO: The Classic Comics Library, a magazine devoted to newspaper strips, cartooning, and popular illustration, in January, 1992.*

RICK MARSHALL: *I wonder if you realize how deep an impact Peanuts has had on your readers.*

CHARLES SCHULZ: No, actually I'm very surprised. And I always kind of worry about it because I realize

that I'm in a medium where it's dangerous to stick your head out because there are so many people that simply don't read the comics and still don't regard it as worthwhile entertainment. There's nothing that annoys me more than somebody coming up to me and saying, "My nineteen-year-old daughter really loves your strip and she still reads it," because that's the audience that I'm really going for. And another thing that bothers me are the parents who come up to me with their two- or three-year-old child on their

shoulder and say, "Look, you know who this is? It's Peanuts' father!" and the poor kid and I look at each other and the kid has no idea what the mother and father are talking about and it really bothers me. Beyond that, I kind of keep to myself and try not to think about that. When people say to me, "I really admire your philosophy," I literally and honestly do not know what they are talking about because I don't even know what my philosophy is.

MARSCHALL: *They try to read something into the strip.*

SCHULZ: Which is all right. I think that even minor art forms like this, as Robert Short tried to talk about in *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, do have certain truths in them, and I think that's important, and I think that people should be able to read whatever they want to into what they're looking at or reading. But as far as an overall philosophy goes, I'm really not sure what it is. Although I try to draw a gentle strip, I try to draw a strip that doesn't have any real cruelty in it, outside of things like Lucy pulling away the football. And it's not as insulting a strip as it used to be. Of course, I've gotten older, and I'm not as insulting as I used to be myself.

MARSCHALL: *You don't consciously put your philosophy in it like Harold Gray did in Little Orphan Annie, but it's obviously a reflection of yourself.*

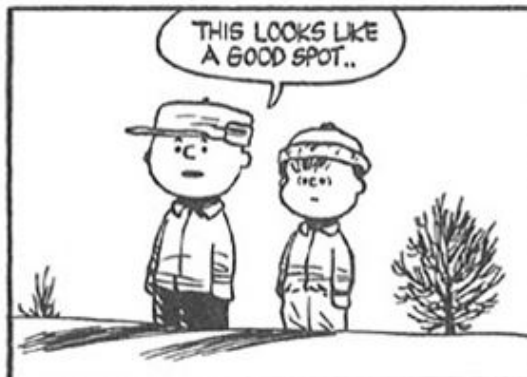
I'd like to ask about your background. I know you grew up in St. Paul. Your name is Schulz. Isn't that German? Do you have any ethnic flavor in your background, or has your family been here for many generations?

SCHULZ: My dad was born in Germany, but he was the only one in the family who was. Apparently, his parents went over on a year's vacation or something back to Germany, where he was born, but his brothers and sisters were all born in this country. My mother

was one of nine children, and I always regarded myself really as being Norwegian, and not German. I think I was a little bit ashamed of being German, due to World War I, and always played that down. I never think about nationalities, and I know my own children don't think of nationalities: If you were to ask them what nationality they are, I think they are probably the

first generation who would now say American.

My dad was a barber. I always admired him for the fact that both he and my mother had only third grade educations and, from what I remembered hearing in conversations, he worked pitching hay in Nebraska one summer to earn enough money to go to barber school, got himself a couple of jobs and



eventually bought his own barber shop. And I think he at one time owned two barber shops and a filling station, but that was either when I was not born or very small, so I don't know much about that. But, of course, I was raised during the Depression struggle, which didn't affect me personally, because I don't think little kids are into what's going on. If you have pancakes for dinner, you think that's wonderful because you like pancakes. You don't realize that you're probably having them because your parents can't afford anything more.

But my dad ran a three-chair barbershop...

MARSHALL: *Ran it through the Depression?*

SCHULZ: Right through the Depression. I know at one point he was seven months behind on his rent, but he told me years later it didn't matter because the big building where his barber shop was had so many empty spaces in it that the landlord didn't really care, as long as he kept up as much as he could on the rent. But I always admired him for being a self-employed person who loved his work. I remember his telling me several times that he loved to get up in the morning and go to work, and I think he was as totally at home in the barber shop as I am off doodling in my studio. Years later, I began to realize that a lot of this being at home in your place of work is not necessarily because you love it so much, but because you're secure there, and he probably had the same travel fears that I have. But he was incapable of expressing them and I knew about it, and I never had a chance to talk about these

things with him. I don't know how much my dad made, but I never felt that I wanted anything. I had a baseball glove and a bicycle, for which my dad paid \$24 and paid for it at the rate of four dollars a week at Western Auto. And we had a car. We never had a new car, but....

MARSHALL: *Did you have friends whose families suffered through the Depression?*

SCHULZ: We never knew. You know, you're just little kids and you're playing cops and robbers and cowboys and Indians and you organize your baseball games. There was no little league at that time, so all of our baseball games were between neighborhood teams. We would make up our own teams and challenge another neighborhood. We literally did lose a game once 40 to 0, which is where I got the idea for Charlie Brown's string of losses.

The highlight of our lives was, of course, Saturday afternoons, going to the local theatre. We would buy a box of popcorn for a nickel from a popcorn shop a few stores down from the theatre and then we'd go to the afternoon matinee. My favorite movie, I still



remember, was *Lost Patrol* with Victor McLaglen. I loved those desert movies, which is why I like drawing Snoopy as the foreign legionnaire. We never went downtown to a movie to a first run theatre. I think first run theatres were about 35 cents. If we went downtown on Sunday night to a movie, it was always to a double feature where the theatre only charged 15 cents per person.

MARSCHALL: *Was St. Paul in the '20s and '30s anything like Garrison Keillor or Jean Shepherd's stories about growing up in a mid-western town?*

SCHULZ: I don't know Shepherd and I've only heard four of the Keillor tapes, but that was different. He's talking about small towns. St. Paul is not a small town. I always thought of myself as growing up, really, in the city. So I always regarded myself as a city boy. I grew up on the sidewalks, not in the country.

MARSCHALL: *You were never tempted to make Peanuts a city strip?*

SCHULZ: I don't know where the Peanuts kids live. I think that, originally, I thought of them as living in these little veterans' developments, where Joyce and I first lived when we got married out in Colorado Springs. Now I don't think about it at all. My strip has become so abstract and such a fantasy that I think it would be a mistake to point out a place for them to live.



MARSCHALL: *Your backgrounds are pretty sparse, too. You've never committed yourself with tract homes or anything.*

SCHULZ: No, I've never been able to reconcile just how those backgrounds should be drawn, or even the interiors. I admire people who can do that well. I'm never quite sure how it should be done. I fight it all the time.

MARSCHALL: *Segar used to do that little roof just hanging a little bit over the horizon—every horizon. Speaking of Segar, I would like to draw you out a little bit on the strips you grew up with, the special favorites of yours.*

SCHULZ: Well, *Popeye*, of course. I could draw a great Popeye when I was a kid. And I could draw Mickey Mouse. I could draw the three little pigs, and, strangely enough, I used to like the black panthers that Lyman Young drew in *Tim Tyler's Luck*. You know, I was thinking about it today: When I was, I suppose, about 11—maybe 12, I'm not sure—I didn't really realize the value of drawing. I remember one night visiting some relatives who lived down in Stillwater, Minnesota or Hudson, Wisconsin. Our parents were talking and the boy, who was a couple of years older than I, showed me his loose-leaf binder. He had drawn some cowboys on the front of it and he was proud of them and I looked at them and thought, "That's kind of neat." And all of a sudden it occurred to me, I could

do that. Why hadn't I ever thought of drawing something on the cover of a loose-leaf binder? I started to do that, and, of course, when the other kids in my class saw me draw these things, then I had to draw them for everybody. It was a lot like autographing these days; it drove me crazy. So I didn't really know the joy at the time of drawing, or what you really could do with it.

And I remember, when I was about in the tenth grade, I think, in high school, one of the other guys in class, who was a much better student than I, had illustrated the essay that we were supposed to write. He had done some watercolors and the teacher posted them around the room. And somehow she found out that I could draw, and she said, "Why didn't you do that, Charles?" The reason I didn't do it was because I didn't think it was fair. I really thought that maybe me and a couple of the others were the only ones in the class who could draw and it wouldn't be fair to do

something like that. And I was stunned that this teacher gave me a mild dressing down for not doing it. So it took me a long time to realize the value of drawing.

I'm always surprised at how few people can draw. Down through the years, there were never more than two or three people in any of my classes that could draw fairly well. And in my three years in the Army, I bet I never saw one person in any of the companies or platoons I was in that could draw better than I could—and I've never considered myself that good. There aren't very many people who can draw. I don't think you can learn how to draw. I think you can be given a few tips. Thinking about comic strips, you can learn a few things that can make your strip look better and give it a better appearance and all that, but I don't think you can learn how to draw, just like I don't think you can learn how to sing. Either you have a voice, or you don't have a voice. It's not learning how



to play tennis or golf or anything like that.

MARSCHALL: *Did you ever use your talent for drawing as some sort of power over your fellow students?*

SCHULZ: No. Never.

MARSCHALL: *I used to love to do caricatures of the kids who'd pick on me. They would walk into the classroom and they would see, anonymously of course, a caricature I'd done of them on the board. I thought it was a great power over them.*

SCHULZ: No, I never really liked caricatures and I still don't to this day. I never did caricatures. If somebody has a big nose, I'm sure that they regret the fact they have a big nose and who am I to point it out in gross caricature? So I don't do it. But, knowing how to draw has brought its moments of attention. I worked once at Northwest Printing and Binding as a delivery boy and office boy and one day, I drew a cartoon of the man who worked the big cutting machine and how proud he was when he got a new board to stand on. I was inspired, of course, by J.R. Williams and that type of down home type of humor. And I brought it down and showed it to him and, oh, he was so pleased with it and all the people that worked with him in the place came and looked at it. And, for the next hour, I got lots of attention and that



made me feel good. It did demonstrate a little bit of this kind of power that perhaps you were talking about.

MARSCHALL: *You mentioned Popeye and Tim Tyler's Luck and I know you've written about being a fan of Roy Crane's. Were you drawn as a kid to the continuity strips?*

SCHULZ: I read them all. I liked every comic strip. *Skippy*, of course, was fantastic. Although I couldn't understand why [Percy Crosby] was so careless in his later years. He didn't even take the time to rule out the panels that were on the strip. That baffled me. There were a lot of things that baffled me when I was smaller which I didn't understand. I loved *Buck Rogers*. That was one of my favorite strips. Years later, I read one of the reprint books and discovered how terrible it really was. It wasn't a good strip at all. But it was ahead of its time and that puts some value into it, being ahead of your time.

Later on, as I grew older, in my last year of high school in the correspondence school, I became acquainted with some of the other great cartoonists and if that course did nothing else, it taught me to value good drawing in comics and good pen work. Clare Briggs, I thought, was wonderful and as far as writing, I always thought *The Bungle Family* was a

great strip. And a couple of months ago, I spoke at a meeting or gathering here in Berkeley of some people who wanted to become syndicated and I opened my little speech by saying, "How many people have ever heard of Charles Payne? Raise your hand." Nobody raised their hand. I said, "Charles Payne drew *S'matter Pop*, and if you don't know *S'matter Pop*, frankly, I don't think I even want to talk to you." Because *S'matter Pop* is obviously one of the great strips of all time, beautifully drawn, and so funny. I like that and *Hairbreadth Harry*, I remember I loved *Hairbreadth Harry*. It annoyed me because Rudolph Rasendale was always so mean. And then, of course, later on, Al Capp came along with *Li'l Abner* and I loved *Li'l Abner* and then when Milton Caniff came along and put in the wrinkles where the wrinkles were supposed to be and shot all the camera angles and drew German Lugers the way they were supposed to look, it was a real revelation. There was nothing wrong with the way Chester Gould drew *Dick Tracy*; that was wonderful, too. But Caniff had this unique approach. As I look back upon it now, I don't think his strip was as witty as it could have been, but the drawing was marvelous. It was pure comic strip drawing, which we've never had quite enough of. It was marvelous. So those were all my heroes.



MARSCHALL: *Is there anyone else, maybe a certain period, whom you wanted to draw like?*

SCHULZ: I emulated Roy Crane when I was in my late teens, before I went into the Army. I tried to draw a strip which was similar to that and I used to observe downtown areas in St. Paul as I walked around delivering packages for these printing companies that I worked for—where

would be a good setting for some action and I would try to draw it that way and my drawing was improving, but I had a long way to go. Then, after World War II, when I came home, *Krazy Kat* became my hero. I had never seen *Krazy Kat* up until then because neither one of the papers in the Twin Cities published it, so I didn't know *Krazy Kat*. But then it became my ambition to draw a strip that would have as much life and meaning and subtlety to it as *Krazy Kat* had.

MARSCHALL: *Your nickname is Sparky, and that's after Barney Google's horse Spark Plug. Is that because Barney Google was your favorite strip, or did you just get the nickname?*

SCHULZ: Well, I am told the day after I was born, an uncle, whom I never met [again] until I was 25 years old, came to visit my mother and me, looked down at me and said, "By golly, we are going to call him 'Spark Plug.'" Years later, I discovered that Spark Plug came

into the strip in the middle of the summer of 1922 and I was born in November, so apparently Spark Plug was an instant hit, in probably the most famous strip of its day. My mother and dad from then on called me Sparky. I was never called by them Charles. I was called Charles in school or other places, but all my friends and relatives referred to me as Sparky.



one-panel comic strips. And several weeks before that, six of them were just one long panel. I don't know. It puzzles me. Is it the shrinkage of space or what is it, but it's a bad trend. I don't think that you really build up a group of characters that way. And that's what a cartoonist is going to achieve. Something should be done about it.

MARSCHALL: *Right from the start.*

SCHULZ: Right from the start, I was doomed. [*Barney Google*] was a great strip, you know, and I think that when Snuffy Smith first came in, it was wildly funny. I remember reading a reprint comic book of Snuffy Smith when he was first drafted. I used to just laugh at the things Snuffy said.

GARY GROTH: *Can you talk a little about the current state of the strip? Are there strips you like?*

SCHULZ: No. [Laughter.]

GROTH: *I know you're not wild about the current propensity for one-panel strips...*

SCHULZ: Yeah. It was a strange direction. I think Bob Thaves with his feature *Frank and Ernest* is good, and I suppose he was one of the first to do it, and that's perfectly all right. But now, I was looking at our own local comic page the other night—five features were

GROTH: *Are you fond of Gary Larson's The Far Side?*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah, he's good. He has a unique approach and he draws funny. I like the way the eyeballs are always close together. He draws funny animals and funny people. But I do resent that he is being labeled as the "new far-out humor."

GROTH: *Do you find the current state of the strips despairing?*

SCHULZ: I think the profession is heading in a strange way.

GROTH: *Do you have any theories as to why?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I suppose the number one problem would be space, that we just don't have space on which to work any more. A lot of the people don't know how to adapt to that space. And then, it's the following trends. One person does one thing and pretty soon, all syndicates are hiring people to do the same

thing. I think... I don't know if I should take credit for it or not, there seems to be a lot of what they call "sophisticated humor," with characters saying meaningful things, but in so many of them the character at the end does not say anything meaningful, it's just dumb. It just lay there. The person doesn't have the knack to do that kind of thing.

MARSCHALL: *Has the craft gone out of strips today? You have unique pen lines, thick and thin—I don't know what point you use, but it's like a fingerprint. A lot of cartoonists nowadays seem to think it's easier to use a rapidograph or a felt-tip pen or something like that. I don't think it necessarily reproduces better, and a lot of personality goes out of it.*

SCHULZ: But if you use that kind of pen, you have no thickness at all. If you use felt pens, the lines are just thicker, that's all. Of course it's quicker—you don't have to dip in—but I was a great student of pen techniques back when I worked at Art Construction. My friend and I used to do what we called Bart pen demonstrations. The author of the original cartoon course was Charles Bartholomew and he used to send out what he called "Bart pen demonstrations," which was a little card that had three sets of three pen lines, very thin, medium, and thick, all done with the same pen. And my friend and I used to practice making those when we had nothing else to do. We used to see if we could do three sets of perfect pen lines with the



space between the pen lines narrower than the line itself [laughter]. It was like the surgeon practicing with his scalpel. So, I became really pretty deft with the pen. Now my hands shake and that spoils some of my pen techniques, but sometimes, I can still do it.

MARSCHALL: *That's characteristic, too.*

SCHULZ: No, [laughter] what is funny is that when they try to get someone helping with the licensing or something else, they copy my work and they copy this shaky pen line and say, "Gee, that's nice. How do you do that?" I don't do it on purpose – my hands shake. [Laughter.]

GROTH: *I was wondering what you thought of Walt Kelly's work.*

SCHULZ: I thought near the end, it became boring. I loved the older work and I bought every *Pogo* book that came out. I bought the comic magazine and I read it and I was influenced by it, and I would imitate his way of talking in it, the same way as when I was a kid, I would imitate Al Capp's hillbilly way of talking. But near the end, it got so wordy that I would buy the books and read the first few pages of it and just couldn't get through it. It wasn't funny any more. It's always a shame when people get so caught up with trying to give out their messages that they forget they have to be funny and entertaining. But he sure could draw. I only got to meet Walt once. I just said a few

words to him one night at the Reuben Awards. I never really got to know him.

GROTH: *I was wondering if you paid any attention to the underground comics of the late '60s.*

SCHULZ: I stopped reading comic magazines years ago. I got so totally bored with them, with the super-heroes, all the muscles—the drawings all looked alike, and I just never read any of them. I never read any underground comics. What was strange about them was they pretended to be so different and they all turned out to be the same. They all used the same vulgar expressions and things. I got acquainted with a few of them from the Bay area and I said, “You guys pretend to do something so great and think what we’re all doing is so bland, but actually, what I’m doing is infinitely more difficult than what you’re doing. I’m drawing something that is good, but is clean and decent and I’m not bothering anybody and I’m not hurting anybody.” And I said, “I defy you to do that.” They draw the same dirty pictures, with the same dirty expressions and pretty soon, they’re all alike. What’s so great about that? I admit that some of them are good—Crumb is good—but that has never interested me. Besides, you get back to spirituality. I’ve always been very grateful for what has happened to me and I think it would be ungrateful of me to use whatever sensibilities I have for wrong. So I’ve always been very careful about that.



GROTH: *Were you familiar with Harvey Kurtzman's work?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure, sure.

GROTH: *Did you like it?*

SCHULZ: I'm just familiar with it. A lot of them are wonderful. And the guys who used to draw for MAD magazine were sensational. Boy, some of them can draw.

GROTH: *Are you at all familiar with Carl Barks?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure. But I never saw them when I was a kid, and I don't know why. I never read any Barks.

GROTH: *Did you read comic books when you were a kid?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I not only read them, I bought every one that came out. I had the original first *Famous Funnies* that came out. Some stupid friends of mine tore the cover off it and it disappeared. But I had it for years. I used to buy *Tip-Top Comics* and I can still remember the day when Superman came out in *Action Comics*. I took it over to a friend of mine and we thought, wow... I knew this guy had something. The drawing was nice to look at. It wasn't as....

MARSCHALL: *It was half cartoon.*

SCHULZ: It wasn't as slick as the latest Superman. But it was fun to look at. I knew that—boy, this guy really had something.

GROTH: *Did the EC comics leave any impression on you?*

SCHULZ: What would that be?

GROTH: *Well, of course, MAD comic books. They had also published Harvey Kurtzman's...*

SCHULZ: By then, I had stopped reading them. My own kids read Archie comics and that was about it. But I used to buy the Big Little Books, I bought every Big Little Book that came out until I got overwhelmed by them. I was the librarian in my neighborhood because the kids would come over and borrow my Big Little Books and my comics magazines [laughter]. All of my Big Little Books got lost in the fire in my dad's apartment.

MARSCHALL: *You've said that a lot of Charlie Brown's school experiences come from your school-age experiences.*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah. It took me a long time to become a human being. I was regarded by many as kind of sissyfied, which I resented because I really was not a sissy. I was not a tough guy, but I was good at sports. I was a good baseball player. When I was fifteen, I instantly became a good ball-player. I was good at any sport where you threw things, or hit them, or

Li'l Folks

BY SPARKY



"DO YOU THINK I
COULD HAVE HAD ANYTHING
TO DO WITH THE DEATH
OF BEETHOVEN?"

caught them, or something like that. I hated things like swimming and tumbling and those kinds of things, so I was really not a sissy. We never had the chance in those days to do some of the athletic things we wanted to because the coaches were so intolerant and there was no program for all of us. So I never regarded myself as being much and I never regarded myself as being good looking and I never had a date in high school, because I thought, who'd want to date me? So I didn't bother. And that's just the way I grew up.

I was telling somebody, I think it was just yesterday, that it wasn't until I came back from the war that I really had self-confidence, because I went into

the Army as a nothing person, and I came out as a staff sergeant, squad leader of a light machine gun squad. And I thought, by golly, if that isn't a man, I don't know what is. And I felt good about myself and that lasted about eight minutes, and then I went back to where I am now.

MARSCHALL: *You've said it, and Al Capp and I guess a lot of text humorists have said it: "The basis for humor is pain, suffering, or humiliation." You can intellectualize about that now, but when the strip started, did you see that as a formula?*

SCHULZ: No. When my strip first started, it was so totally different from what it is now that I don't even know what it was when it first started. I had experimented with many different types of features. I used to get on the train in St. Paul in the mornings at breakfast on the train and make that beautiful ride down to Chicago, get there about three in the afternoon, check into a hotel by myself, and the next morning I would get up and make the rounds of the syndicates. My first few trips, I really didn't have enough to show them and only one man treated me nicely. I met him years later and we talked about that and I was able to express to him my appreciation of how polite and nice he was, because some of the other syndicate people were very rude and most of them didn't even let me in the door. But as my work improved, I began to sell this thing called *Li'l Folks* to the St. Paul [*Pioneer Press*]. While I was doing this, I was also working at the art instruction correspondence school, drawing funny little figures, and I developed this three-panel strip which was unique in that what happened in the story was an incident that was only a couple of seconds. And so, when I sent in the panels that were finally accepted by United Features, I hadn't...



MARSHALL: *Excuse me; it was a panel? It wasn't a strip?*

SCHULZ: It was unique. This was something that nobody knew about, and it annoys me that the editor lost my original submissions. For years, he kept promising me he'd send them back and he never sent them back and somebody had them someplace and I would love to know who has them. Either that, or they got thrown away.

But I was looking for an angle.

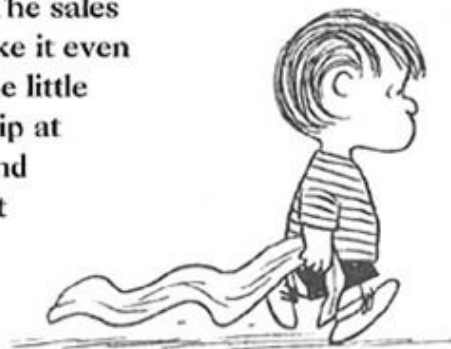
I figured if I'm going to break into this business, I've got to do something that is a little bit different. I had developed this very simple style of drawing and I took all of the best ideas that I sold to the St. Paul paper and I re-drew them in a panel format. I took *Grin and Bear It* as my size to pattern after and, instead of drawing one single panel, I drew one above the other: I figured I'll be smart,

I'll give the editor two cartoons for the price of one and this will be a good sales gimmick. So I sent it in and they were really good and I was very proud of them. And this is what the syndicate editor finally said to me: "We kind of like it. Would you like to come to New York and talk about it?" So, when I went to New York, I brought along a half dozen of these comic strips that I had been working on that I have been telling you about, which were really unique...

MARSCHALL: *These were two tiers?*

SCHULZ: The panel was two tiers. It was called *Li'l Folks*. And that's what the syndicate editor saw in my submissions. But then when I went to New York, in person, I brought along these other things because I wanted to show what other things I could do. And they opened up that package while I was out having breakfast, and decided that they would rather have a strip. And then, [laughter] like syndicate people do, they began to fiddle around with it. The sales manager said, "How about if we make it even broader in its appeal and we have one little kid strip at the top and a teen-age strip at the bottom?" So I thought about it and said, "Oh, all right, I have to do what they tell me." So I did that and they really didn't care for the teen-age thing. And then they said, "We'll just have the kid thing," and then...

I'm kind of lost now, as I tell this story, but somewhere in there, they decided that they'd rather have a strip, and right then was when they made this fateful decision that it was going to be a space-saving strip, which I have resented all my life. Now it may have gotten me started, but I'm not sure, so I had to overcome the fact that I was drawing a space-saving strip under the title *Peanuts*, which was the worst title ever thought up for a comic strip. It's totally ridiculous, has no meaning, is simply confusing, and has no



dignity—and I think my humor has dignity. Those are two things that have hung over me and I've resented my whole career.

MARSCHALL: *Thirty-seven years hasn't softened that?*

SCHULZ: No, no. I hold a grudge, boy.

MARSCHALL: *By "space-saving strip," you mean that it was reproduced smaller than the average comic strip?*

SCHULZ: It was reproduced smaller; it was drawn in four equal panels so that it could be run vertically, horizontally, or in a square, two below two. Now, the ironic part of it is, about a year later, they came out with *Twin Earths*, which was enormous in its size, and *Long Sand*, which was also enormous in its size. Then they told me that newsprint is kind of short and we're having trouble and we think having this as a space-saving strip will help. Well, you

know where *Long Sand* is and you know where *Twin Earths* is. I've always been proud of the fact that quality won out over size and space.

MARSCHALL: *You've kept to that four-panel square format, though you don't have to now. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Schulz later converted the strip to three equal-sized panels and then began varying the panel size from strip to strip, a format that continued throughout the rest of the strip's run.]*

SCHULZ: I'm a great believer in loyalty. I'm not a believer in dictating to the newspaper editor how he

should run my strip. And I've had some papers with me now for 36 years and they have run my strip in the same spot all this time and who am I suddenly to say, "I'm too good to draw a small strip like this, I want more room, I want more space, I want more this or that." I believe in being loyal to these editors who have been loyal to you. And that's just the way I look at things. I don't want to break this agreement here and cause the editor to have to shuffle around everything that he's done and to change all of it.

GROTH: *How do you feel about [Garry] Trudeau's demanding more space [for Doonesbury]?*

SCHULZ: [Pause.] That he's not professional. He's never been professional.

GROTH: *How do you mean that?*

SCHULZ: I don't think he conducts himself in a professional manner in the things that he does.

MARSCHALL: *You're not just talking about the artistry on the strip?*

SCHULZ: It's his whole attitude toward the business.

GROTH: *You don't admire the strip.*

SCHULZ: [Shakes head.]

MARSCHALL: *You just talked about the title Peanuts and you've written about that before Bill Anderson made a list of ten names and Peanuts was chosen. Do you know where he'd come up with that?*

SCHULZ: Well, he told me, a couple of years afterward, "I never saw the strip. Somebody came to me and said: We're gonna start a new kids strip and we need a title. Can you think of anything?" He said, "I wrote down ten ideas and one of them was *Peanuts* and that's what they took."

MARSCHALL: *Do you know where he got Peanuts from?*

SCHULZ: No.





MARSCHALL: *He told me it was because thinking of a kids' strip, a kid's milieu, Howdy Doody was the hottest thing on kids' TV at that time and where the kids sat in Howdy Doody was the Peanut Gallery. That seemed logical to him.*

SCHULZ: But you see what bothers me. In the first place, it has no dignity. I don't even like the word. It's not even a nice word. They didn't realize that I was going to draw a strip that I think has dignity. I think it has class. But, of course, and I've said this before, when a young person goes into the president's office, what that syndicate president is buying is the potential of this young person. He's not even buying the work that he is looking at, he's buying the potential ten, 20 years down the road, and how does he know? They didn't know when I walked in there that here was a fanatic. Here was a kid totally dedicated to what he was going to do. And to label then something that was going to be life's work with a name like "Peanuts" was really insulting.

Now we'll go to the next step, which is that little kids are never called "peanuts" as they said they were. They never are. The only "peanuts" that are referred to are insignificant; something with no color, or else it might be the nickname of a ball player or some little kid. And I said they're going to confuse Charlie Brown with the name *Peanuts*. "No, no, no, no," they

said. "No, no, it's just a catchy name that will attract the editors." So, what happens the very first year, I begin to get letters saying, "I love this new strip with Peanuts and his dog." Oh geez! That aggravates me.

I never mention [the name]. If someone asks me what I do, I always say, "I draw that comic strip with Snoopy in it, Charlie Brown and his dog."

MARSCHALL: *You've never pictured adults, parents or otherwise, in the strip. Maybe once or twice you've had the hand of an adult at a magazine counter or something like that. Was that something you set out to do?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I never thought about it at first. It was the way I drew the characters, they filled up the strip and I drew them from the side view. The type of humor that I was using did not call for camera angles. I liked drawing the characters from the same view all the way through because the ideas were very brief and I didn't want anything in the drawing to interrupt the flow of what the characters were either saying or doing. So there became no room for adults in the strip. At one point, I think, years and years ago, I drew a whole bunch of adults in a gallery where Lucy was playing in a golf tournament, which is something I never should have done. But it was an experiment.



MARSCHALL: *In the background...*

SCHULZ: Yeah, in the background. I drew these adults. I never should have done that. And then I used to have off-stage voices, which again was simply because I didn't know how to handle it. Now, the strip has become so abstract that the introduction of an



adult would destroy it because you can't have an adult in a strip where a dog is sitting on a dog-house, pretending he's chasing the Red Baron. It just doesn't work. So, it's taken all these years really to learn some of these things. You make mistakes,

but fortunately it's a medium that allows for mistakes if you recognize them right away. It's possible—I think—to make a mistake in the strip and without realizing it, destroy it. My best example, I think—and this will surprise you—I think Eugene the Jeep was a mistake. I think Eugene the Jeep took the life out of Popeye himself, and I'm sure Segar didn't realize that. I realized it myself a couple of years ago when I began to introduce Snoopy's brothers and sisters. I realized that when I put Belle and Marbles in there it destroyed the relationship that Snoopy has with the kids, which is a very strange relationship. And these things are so subtle when you're doing them, you can make mistakes and not realize them. You've got to watch that very carefully. What made Popeye great

was that he solved all his problems by whopping somebody, but then by having Eugene the Jeep be able to predict the future and do all of these things, I think, was just the wrong direction. And once you go there, it's almost impossible to pull back. I think the Jeep was a great idea, but it shouldn't have become as dominant as it became.

MARSCHALL: *It introduced a whole lot of other fantasy characters.*

SCHULZ: The same with Superman. Superman was destroyed on several levels. In the first place, a comic strip cannot appear in its original form in too many areas because then, the tension goes out of it. You cannot have a daily strip going, a Sunday page going, *Action Comics* going, another Superman comic book going, a movie going. You can't have all these things going because he can't be damaged in one area and be undamaged in another. There are too many things going on at the same time. Now, Superman was great until he began to be able to see through things and fly. Superman shouldn't fly; Superman should jump. So they made a lot of mistakes.

MARSCHALL: *Before we leave the first period of your life, when you took the correspondence course, was it a federal school then, or...*

SCHULZ: Yes. It was the federal school. I was sitting at home at



night and I used to draw on the dining room table. I had to push back the beautiful tablecloth my mother had made, put the newspaper down, and draw. I remember I fooled her one time. I brought a magic inkblot and pretended the inkbottle had fallen over and she came rushing in and I said, "Mom, look." She screamed and ran out to get a dish-towel. When she came back in, then I laughed—great sense of humor.

She came in one night and she said, "Look here in the newspaper. It says 'Do you like to draw? Send for a free talent test.'" So I sent in and a few weeks later, a man knocked on the door and it was a man from the correspondence school. And he sold us the course.

MARSCHALL: *They went door to door?*

SCHULZ: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Did you ever finish the course?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure.

MARSCHALL: *I don't think I've met a cartoonist who's had the Famous Artists course who actually finished one. They thought the world of them, but...*

SCHULZ: I may be wrong, but the percentage of people that finish the course was very low, because it just takes a lot of drive to do this on your own at home. Now, this is a good course, and they were all good instructors, dedicated people. They were always



sending out material to encourage you to do your work and all that sort of thing. All my friends work there.

MARSCHALL: *And you worked there, eventually...*

SCHULZ: After the war, yeah...

MARSCHALL: *Correcting the students?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. See, I was afraid to go to art school. I could not see myself sitting in a class with thirty other people who could draw circles around me. It just didn't interest me. So I didn't do anything after high school. I had a couple of jobs. And then, of course, the war came along, and that was the turning point for all of us. I remember visiting the service club one Sunday afternoon and seeing a show of originals of gag cartoons that had been in *Colliers* and *The New Yorker* or wherever they were, looking at them, and admiring how beautifully drawn they were. And before that, when I was still a teenager, drawing some kind of adventure strip, my mother noticed in the paper that there was a show of originals in the downtown library. We went down there that afternoon, and I walked around the room and I saw Roy Crane drawing boats in the water, then went home and took all of my work and tore it up and threw it away and started over again.

I knew I had a long way to go. But I used to go over then to the correspondence school, which was in

Minneapolis—although I mailed in all of my lesson work—I didn't even have the nerve to take that over in person, although we were allowed to do it. But then later on, after I got my diploma and graduated, I used to take my comic strips over and I would show them to an older man named Frank Wing and he used to draw this thing called *Yesterday*. He was a great believer in literal drawing. He could draw beautifully and he tried to encourage people to draw from life—you know, if you have to draw a shoe, put a shoe down on the ground and learn how to draw a shoe. You can't draw a cartoon shoe until you learn how to draw a real shoe. And he would look at my work, but he couldn't really tell me what was wrong with it and I used to say, "Well, look at *Popeye*. He doesn't draw real people." He never could explain to me why *Popeye* was good. And that always puzzled me.

MARSCHALL: *Did he really think it was?*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah. He liked *Popeye*, but he couldn't tell me what marvelous quality was there. So, later on, after I got a job, he used to sit with me and we used to laugh and joke about things and talk about comic strips and stuff. But I learned a lot from Frank Wing.

MARSCHALL: *You sold gag cartoons to the Saturday Evening Post and, am I right, no other magazine?*

SCHULZ: No, nope...

MARSCHALL: *That's incredible—I mean, just starting out...*

SCHULZ: The [other magazines] just didn't buy the things.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah, but if you're going to sell to some magazines, it's going to be This Week or American Legion or something like that. The Post is the cream of the crop.*

SCHULZ: I did it all wrong. I drew this little cartoon of a boy sitting out on the ends of a chaise lounge, with his feet on the little stool. Then I finished it up and just sent it in all by itself.

MARSCHALL: *As a finish...*

SCHULZ: Yeah. I'd been sending things to other magazines. And I came home—I used to get mail from my dad's barbershop, when I lived in an apartment around the corner and upstairs. It said, "Check Tuesday for spot drawing of boy on lounge." So, I put it away. My dad and I went out for dinner that night, as we usually did, and I said, "I got a note today from



the *Post*. Gee, now I understand that. They're going to send me a check on Tuesday. I thought it meant I should check the mail on Tuesday, they were going to send it back." And, sure enough, that Tuesday, I got a check for \$40.00 and it was my first sale, my first major sale. I had been selling cartoons, *Li'l Folks*, to the *Pioneer* for two years and I had been doing lettering for the Catholic comic magazine *Timeless Topics* for several years.

MARSCHALL: *That was located...*

SCHULZ: That was in St. Paul. I used to letter the whole comic magazine by myself: I would letter it in French and I would letter it in Spanish and it seems to me once I lettered the whole thing in Latin, sitting in my kitchen at night. I didn't know any of those languages, but they gave me the translations. I loved it.

MARSCHALL: *Did you do any other drawings for them, maybe fillers?*

SCHULZ: Once, I sold them two pages of little gag cartoons, four to a page, called *Just Keep Laughing*. He was going to run them regularly and then, after the second one, he said, "No. The priest that runs the place doesn't like it, so I have to tell you we don't need any more." And then, one day, I had done a special rush job for them. I went down after work, picked up these pages, went home, lettered the whole thing, and had it down there the next morning for him and as a show of gratitude, he let me do a four-page story and

that was the only thing I ever got to do for him. You know, I saw him last year down in Santa Barbara and we reminisced about this.

MARSCHALL: [Showing Schulz some old roughs from his collection.] *After you made that initial sale to the Post, did you then start submitting roughs like these...*

SCHULZ: Yeah. Where are those from?

MARSCHALL: *I think I got them from Jim Ivy.*

SCHULZ: Yeah, but where would he get them? You know, David Stanford sent me some Xerox copies of things like this several months ago. Where did it come from? Because if they are *Post* submissions, they should have been sent back to me: I mean, they were rejected.



THE SATURDAY EVENING POST
"I'm taking it for granted that you're very anxious to impress me!"

MARSCHALL: *And if they'd been bought, they would have been sent back with notes on them or something.*

SCHULZ: No matter what... But they weren't bought. Isn't that weird?

Better keep them. So, I sent in ten every week and over a period of two years, after a couple of years, I hit a terrible slump. You know, John Doly was kind enough to tear off little

notes and clip them to each cartoon and tell me why he didn't buy it. I've never met the man, but I've been told that he was very kind that way and very considerate of cartoonists. And then I began to get on track and I made most of my sales using the gimmick of little kids using something the way it shouldn't be, like they were playing football on the bed and one of them said, "We're close enough. Let's try for a field goal!" and the bedposts were the posts. And in another, they were going to have a race down this long davenport and the davenport was made to look like a racetrack. In another one, they were playing hockey on top of the birdbath. I've had Snoopy do that now for years. That was the kind of idea I sold.

MARSCHALL: *Props?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. And the first good line I thought up was one that was jotted down on the wall over there. Somebody permafaxed it for me; it was a girl standing in front of a desk talking to a guy and she says, "We're



taking up a collection for one of the girls in the office who isn't getting married or leaving, but feels that she's stuck here for the rest of her life." I think that was my breakthrough of doing something that was reasonably literate. Anyway, I sold fifteen over a period of two years, and then I sold *Peanuts*, and when I went to sign the contract, I said, "Would it be all right to

continue to submit ideas to the *Post*?" And he said, "No, I don't think you should, because an editor who buys your strip usually buys your name and your work and we think he should have exclusive use of your work." That was all right by me. I wanted to draw a strip. I couldn't stand that freelancing and that bitter blow of opening the envelope and seeing a note that said, "Sorry, nothing this week." It was so crushing.

MARSCHALL: *Well, it's got to be like baseball players, when a successful ball player fails two out of three times at the plate. No matter how much you sell to the magazines, most of the gags are rejected.*

SCHULZ: Right. And I never got into the real professional pattern, which you have to do, I think. You have to have a lot of markets and be very practical about it. I never got that far in it. I just sold the strip too quickly so I never became a real gag cartoonist.

MARSHALL: *Peanuts really was the renaissance—do you agree with this?—of the intellectual strip. Growing up, Peanuts played a large role in my not being embarrassed about using big words in front of the other kids, and the Beethoven thing made me interested in Beethoven and Mozart. Do you agree with that definition of the strip? Did you have something like that in mind when you started the strip, or was this just a next generation Skipppy?*

SCHULZ: I didn't have anything in mind. I was just drawing. [Looking at promo brochure.] This came out later, though. See, Violet didn't come into the strip for at least a year and Schroeder didn't come in for over a year. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Actually, four and a half and seven months, respectively.] I never did figure out how to draw Schroeder's hair. Why did they buy that? That looks terrible.

MARSHALL: *But it's marketed here as a little kid's strip.*

SCHULZ: Yeah. Well, I've fought that all my life, too. And I fight it with licensees today. I don't draw for little kids.... Well, I draw for myself, which is who I think we all draw for. We draw for ourselves and hope that people like it. But the licensees keep driving it down for little kids. We did the first television show, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, we did the best show we could do and what happens? We win an Emmy for the best children's animated show of the year. We didn't draw it for kids. We drew it for grown-ups. I just draw

for myself, and draw it as well as I can. I'm not pretending to be modest. I know I'm not an intellectual. I don't even think I'm very smart. I really don't. I think I'm witty and I think I know how to skim the surface of a subject and take out enough for me to use and to make it look like I know a lot about the subject. You really don't have to know much to be a cartoonist. So if it's an intellectual strip, I've never really even thought about it. I'm glad. I never thought about it, but I did want to draw something that was good.



MARSHALL: *Comic strip history breaks down into the pre-Peanuts era and the post-Peanuts era. It seems to me one of your main contributions is a technical construction of the strip. You started with a small cast of characters in the beginning, and then it got large. You drew them all with very, very strong personality traits, and then established a lot of premises and a lot of situations for them to fit into. So many strips before that were basically situational, "What are we going to do next?"—or humorous continuity. Since you established this type of strip—large cast, strong personalities as opposed to situations—virtually everything since that has come down the pike has been in that format; Doonesbury, certainly.*

SCHULZ: Few people give me credit for having started this, but I think a lot of them don't realize that I did start it. I think, too, they used to say *Peanuts* has brought humor back into the comics page, because there is no doubt that, during the war, we had a lot of

adventure things, and gag strips and humor strips had virtually disappeared. I think the great tragedy is now we have lost the continuity strip. We've lost, especially, the humorous continuity strip. They're all turning into gag strips, they're all saying what they think are meaningful statements—they're not meaningful at all; they're just dumb. And that's a tragedy, too. A lot of it is due to the shrinking of the size. Poor Al Capp would die if he had to draw at the size of these things these days. Now, we have this terrible trend, which has just suddenly burst upon us, of the one-panel comic strip. I don't know where that's going to lead.

MARSCHALL: *It's cheating.*

SCHULZ: And boring. Not only that, but it's robbing a creator of a chance to develop a group of characters and some good situations. Now, I like what you said before, the way you expressed that about from the characters, we went to certain situations, and I think this is the key to the whole thing. I created Beethoven's birthday, I created Linus and his blanket, I created the pursuit of the Red Baron, I created the pulling of the football, I created the Great Pumpkin— all of these, these are the things that make up a comic strip. You can't sit down and say, "I think I'm gonna draw a comic strip and this will be my main character." The main character has nothing to do with it. What you really need are the situations and that's where you should



start. Nobody wants to start with that. They want to start by thinking up a character, which will be a good gimmick and will make good plush toys. That's the wrong direction.

MARSCHALL: *More strips today start out based on animated TV shows. Seventeenth on the list is, "Oh, yeah, let's do a comic strip to base this thing on." It's not based on it.*

SCHULZ: It's interesting too: you mention animation.

Animation doesn't make good comic strips.

Animated characters are drawn to revolve. They're drawn with a slick brush line and the eyes and nose and ears, everything placed in a rubbery way, so that the character can revolve and do certain things. That kind of drawing does not fit in the comic strip page. The comic strip page has drawing, which is a scratchy pen technique. Usually, in some of the great old strips, the characters are only

drawn from a couple of different views. Popeye was usually drawn from the left three quarters or the right three quarters. When you turn him into an animated character, he has to become rubber and it doesn't work. Bill Melendez and his animators had a terrible time with the *Peanuts* characters. Fortunately, we're in semi-animation, and it works. I told him, "This is just a cartoon. Don't worry about making it so lifelike. They don't have to turn if you don't want them to, just have them flip from one spot to another. That's all



right. It's still a cartoon. We're not trying to do *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*."

MARSCHALL: *You once said in the development of character, "I don't think the cartoonist can show a character. He's got to expose a character, maybe, through situations and explain it as you show it."*

When Snoopy started thinking, that told more about him and the things you had him do. Did that just evolve, too? Snoopy didn't think at first.

SCHULZ: No, he didn't think. He actually barked and ran around on all fours and was just kind of a cute little puppy, and I don't know how he got to walking, and I don't know how he first began to think, but that was probably one of the best things that I ever did.

MARSCHALL: *Linus and the blanket: was that just—*

SCHULZ: My own kids all had blankets, so that was something I observed. And I said many times that I was glad I did because I know if I hadn't done it Mort Walker would have come in with it a few months later for sure. Since then, I've seen other comic strips with blankets, and they've used the same ideas I had already drawn. In fact, lately, I'm beginning to see ideas in comic strips, which I drew twenty years ago, which makes me happy to know I beat these guys. But I remember being beaten by J.R. Williams by

thirty years, and I was beaten by Gus Arriola by ten or fifteen years, so that happens. But I do see people using ideas, which I've done a long time. Well, it's just a pattern of thinking; I don't say that it's stealing. I know it's not stealing; it's just a pattern of thinking.

MARSCHALL: *The sincerest kind of flattery.*

SCHULZ: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Okay, we mentioned Snoopy and the blanket. Charlie Brown evolved. He was almost like a wise guy, at the beginning?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. Little by little the characters begin to fall into place. I think there is a similarity to the lead characters in a lot of scripts. There is one simple character who is kind of innocent.



He's not too strong in his personality; if he were, then he would dominate the strip. He's the one that holds everything together, and it's the other characters who have the unique personalities. He can't be a terrible character, but he has to be somebody that you like that holds things together.

And that's what Charlie Brown is there for. Although, sometimes I think I should use him more—but I've got so many characters now that it's difficult to know who I should use the most. For a while, I received a couple of letters from somebody

that said, "Don't use the dog so much. Get back to the little kids." I never pay attention to letters like that. But maybe he was right: maybe I was using Snoopy too much. I'm always trying to be selective. I'm always trying to do different things. And I always wanted to have some girls in the strip, which is why I have drifted more toward Peppermint Patty and Marcie.

There is something else here which is worth mentioning, I think, which again it's important



towards building personalities and characters, in that Peppermint Patty calls Charlie Brown "Chuck." She's the only one in the strip that does that, where Marcie calls him "Charles." Everybody else calls him "Charlie Brown." Those are the little things. If you have enough of those little things, then I think you take on some kind of

depth. I'm not a believer in funny names. I think a funny name is fine for one gag or one idea, but I don't think people are going to laugh at that funny name every day. You can't count on that. That's why my strip doesn't have many funny things like that in it, where you're trying for that extra laugh all the time.

MARSCHALL: *In that vein, were you planning for the April Fool to take off like the Great Pumpkin did?*

SCHULZ: No. That was just a one-time strip. I didn't even like the way I drew it. I like the Easter Beagle. For a long while, I wouldn't do anything on Easter. I'm very sensitive to not offending anybody and I thought I shouldn't do anything with Easter. But then I thought, "Oh, the heck with it. It's fun—the Easter Beagle," so I did it anyway.

MARSCHALL: *My next question was going to be about Robert Short's two books [The Gospel according to Peanuts and The Parables of Peanuts]. Do you think he went too far in analyzing the strip?*

SCHULZ: Well, I don't know if he really analyzed. I think what he was really trying to do was use a comic strip as a springboard toward some kind of spiritual ideas. Robert's a great guy. We didn't even know each other when he wrote the book. I think the book had been out for a year before we finally met, but since then, we've become close friends and we love being together and talking about different things. I think he likes to just draw little spiritual thoughts from everything that goes on in his life and it occurred to me *Peanuts* was providing some spiritual jumping off place. Now I know it didn't come off that way, but I know that's what he was intending. The book was never mine and it was never



meant to be my idea. That was part of the original agreement that, sure, he can use the strips, but it's not my writing.

MARSCHALL: *It's his interpretation. You just talked about readers being offended—you've probably gotten complaints when you've used Scripture, which you have more than any other artist.*

SCHULZ: I think I've done more authentic scriptural strips than anybody. I hate cheap spiritual innuendo. I hate strips showing the kid praying, talking about what mean things he did in the daytime. I just despise that kind of thing. I'd like to think that mine was done on a better level than that. I'm a reasonable student of the Scriptures, a typical mid-western scholar. I think I use the Scripture very well in the strip in ways nobody else has ever thought of doing it, or would have the nerve, or even has the scholarship to do it. I'm proud of that, and also very sensitive to it. I've always done it in a nice way, never offensive. I was amazed when we put out the book called *The Beagles and the Bunnies* that we had enough to fill out the whole book. I never dreamed of that.

MARSCHALL: *You're a committed Christian?*

SCHULZ: I think I'm becoming a secular humanist [laughter], but I don't want to get into that.

MARSCHALL: *I've heard that term applied to you. Did I read once that you were a lay preacher?*

SCHULZ: Oh, well, I was very active in the church group right after World War II. We were all in our twenties and we went to Sunday morning services. We went to Sunday evening youth meetings—although we weren't really youths—we went to Sunday evening services and Wednesday night prayer meetings and we were all very dedicated to the church. And now and then, I might be asked to speak on a Sunday evening. I have even spoken out on street corners, which I never should have done. I would never do it again because I no longer feel I'm in a position to tell anybody anything, so

I don't do it. But, anyway, I did all those things and it was a good group; they were nice people. I still have contact with a few of them and I'm in contact with the minister, who is now retired. We studied the Scriptures and discussed them avidly. That's where my background for all of those biblical things comes from and I have an honorary doctorate from Anderson College, which is the Church of God College.



"I wish you wouldn't always refer to our dates as 'fellowship'!"

MARSCHALL: *When you go from your knowledge, or maybe you turn to Proverbs or some of those parables, you don't do it in a subversive way to get a point across.*

SCHULZ: I'm never grinding an axe. I'm never doing it to teach anybody anything, very seldom. Maybe if we looked through them I could point out a few where I might be trying to say something against hypocrisy, I really don't know. It's hard to say overall. It's just that certain phrases pop into my mind and I think that would be funny, so I look up the Scriptures or else I remember a Scripture and suddenly, I find something comes into my mind, a certain way of using it, that's all.

GROTH: *You said something earlier that I thought was potentially fascinating, that you were becoming a secular humanist?*

SCHULZ: Well, I don't go to church any more. I taught adult Sunday school class in Minneapolis and came out here to a local Methodist church, but I never became a Methodist. They were just a nice group of people and they were all quite educated. I enjoyed the class and I did it for about ten years. Finally, I just ran out of things to say and it became an effort to do all the studying. Besides, this business of always having to think of something gets to you after a while. It got so that I could never be invited to

a banquet without having to get up and say a few words. I have to think up a daily strip and I have to think up a Sunday and I was drawing youth cartoons for Church magazine and trying to think of a Sunday school lesson and studying and oh, gosh... Finally, after a while I just had to say, let somebody else do it, because I just don't have any more to say. So I haven't been back to church.

GROTH: *Is there a sense that you're questing for...*

SCHULZ: [Laughter.] No, I'm not questing for anything. I don't know anything, frankly. I think it's all a total mystery. I have no idea why we're here and I have no idea what happens after you die. My class wasn't one so much of teaching as it was just getting people to say things. I know I led them through the Bible verse by verse four times and each time, I would learn something more. I was not at all anxious to teach them what I thought about.... Every now and then, someone

would say, "Well, what do you think?" and I would say, "It doesn't matter what I think. I just want to hear what you think and get you to talk about these things and actually read the Scriptures instead of saying, 'Well, I've heard about that in this or that.' "



"I think I've made one of the first steps toward unraveling the mysteries of the Old Testament. . . . I'm starting to read it!"

MARSHALL: *An awful lot of people haven't.*

SCHULZ: Oh, I know I know. I don't even know what secular humanism is. Have you ever heard of the book, I'm sure you have, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*? I know the author very well. She asked me what I believed. I said what I thought I believed in, and she said, "You are a secular humanist, that's what you are," and I said, "I am?" and she said, "Yeah, that's what I think you are." [Laughter.] But she's a marvelous lady.

GROTH: *Was there ever a time when you questioned your religion?*

SCHULZ: Well, it's not a matter of questioning... My religious thing all started, it must have been a matter of gratitude. I was brought up Lutheran, but my dad liked to go fishing on Sundays, so we almost never went to church. I was never really brought up in church. But my mother was extremely ill with cancer when I was just turning twenty. She was just coming out of the hospital. She suffered terribly. I used to wake up at night and hear her down the hall crying in pain. It was a terrible time. I got drafted as soon as I turned twenty and I had to report. I got to go home a couple of weekends as they were deciding what ought to be done and one Sunday night I was home, she was so ill. I was saying good night to

her to her back and she said, "Well, goodbye, Sparky. We'll probably never see each other again." It has to be one of the most heart-breaking things in my life. It's bad enough to get drafted, but to know that your mom will die. She was only 48. And sure enough, she died the next day. Then I came home from the funeral and the next thing I knew, I'm back with the army on a troop train and I'm traveling through the night with a bunch of guys I've never seen before in my life without knowing where I'm going. And I started going to church just out of a feeling of gratitude that I survived all of that. I felt that God protected me and helped me and gave me the strength to survive because I could have gone off in all sorts of wrong directions. I always felt that I was helped to live through those three years and come home because I never got shot or anything.

I knew about this Church of God—my dad and I used to go now and then—but one night, it was a

Wednesday night, I was feeling very lonely and I knew they needed a new sign out in front of the church. It was a very poor church, so I walked all the way down several miles through the snow to the church. I told the minister I would make him a new sign if he wanted me to. He was a great man. I made a lot of friends there. That's how it all happened. And then we came out here and my



first wife didn't care much about getting involved in the church once we got out here, so we sort of drifted away from it. But now I've ended up with one daughter becoming a Mormon and going to England as a Mormon missionary [laughter]. We've become very close because of it; even though I don't like Mormons. I think that it's drawn us close together, we can talk about the scriptural things that she was never interested in before and she has a fine husband. My family has gone in all different directions, but they're all good kids.

MARSCHALL: *We talked about continuity. It seems to me that one thing that could revive the newspaper comic strip, the humor strip, would be the return of humor continuities. And you use them. How do you plan them? Do you know the ending before you start, or do you just let it run and surprise yourself when it comes to an end?*

SCHULZ: I never have any idea where I'm going with it and I discovered something, which is why I don't think—and I suppose I'll always offend somebody someplace—I don't think you can write a comic strip on a typewriter. I think you're robbing yourself of the ideas that come from drawing, so what I'm more interested in is a good, standard, day-to-day group of ideas, which is more important than where the story goes. I'm doing a story right now and I have no idea where I'm going with it, but I'm very interested in try-



ing to make each day funny. If you think of an overall story, you're liable to end up with a weak strip on Tuesday and Friday or Saturday and I don't want to do that. I'm more interested in making each day as funny as I can. I don't know, maybe I've had some stories run five weeks, five or six at the longest. I haven't had any lately. They're awfully hard work and you have to have time to think about them. But I do agree that some kind of stories and strips

can bring the reader back so he doesn't want to miss the next day's strip. It's very important in building circulation.

MARSCHALL: *You've got characters with neuroses—Charlie Brown with his inferiority complex and Linus being insecure and Lucy kvetching and all that. Does anyone advance the observation that you have done sort of Yiddish humor in WASP clothes?*

SCHULZ: Not really. I have become a fairly good friend, through the mail, of Leo Rosten. He sends me all of his books, and I think *I'm the Captain* is one of the greatest humor books ever written. Otherwise, I don't know much about it.

There is one thing I do resent. I resent the fact that when we talk about America's great humorists, comic strip artists are never mentioned, not even the great people that draw for the *New Yorker*. Where's George Price?

MARSCHALL: *A couple of characters—Frieda and Faron. Are you a fan of country music?*

SCHULZ: I was. I'm not a fan of any music any more. It's very personal, but when Joyce and I were separated and divorced, and I was living alone and I was very unhappy, and I was separated from my children for a few months there, I couldn't stand to listen to the radio or any music. So I stopped listening to music and I really have not gotten back into it. I used to love country and western music. The whole business of Charlie Brown and the red-haired girl came from listening to a Hank Williams song. I was home alone one night listening to it and it was so depressing that it occurred to me that I would do something with Charlie Brown and the little red-haired girl and that's how it all started. [Laughter.]

MARSCHALL: *You'll never show her, right?*

SCHULZ: No, and I think it was a mistake to even show her on television, but you make a lot of mistakes when you do a lot of media. But I could never draw her into the strip now. You reach a point where the reader has already drawn her. And you could never live up to the way the reader has drawn her in his or her imagination.

MARSCHALL: *Was that a temptation because of the animated format, or...*

SCHULZ: I'm not good at drawing pretty little faces. That would be the number one fear. I could probably be tempted into drawing her, if I could draw a real knockout of a cute little girl, but I don't think I could. So I don't think I will. I like the little face on the girl that keeps telling Linus, "Aren't you kind of old for me?" Even that face was a struggle to draw.



MARSCHALL: *You named Woodstock during the Woodstock era. Were you speaking of your readership, or did you just hear the name and think it was neat?*

SCHULZ: I had been reading the *Life* magazine article about the Woodstock festival and I had the little bird in the strip. It was a she and she was Snoopy's secretary and I was doing secretary jokes quite often so then I thought

Woodstock would be a good name for this bird and also, it will get the attention of these people that liked that kind of thing. Suddenly, she was not a secretary; she became Woodstock, the boy. [Laughter.] It just happened. But that's what's good about a comic strip—you can just do it.

MARSCHALL: *Have licensing and merchandising or reader reaction ever influenced you to do things with characters and storylines?*

SCHULZ: No. There are a lot of temptations and that would be easy to do, but I've never drawn anything

with the thought that it would be good for licensing. I've never even emphasized a certain character because I thought it would be important. Right now, it's very tempting because we're working on this movie, starring Spike, and it's very tempting to push Spike in the strip just to give him more attention, so that people will be ready for him. I don't think I could do it if I wanted to because I can't think of that many ideas for him. But I like drawing Spike in the desert and I love drawing those rocks and the cactuses. [Laughter.]

GROTH: *Do you impose a substantial amount of authority over how your work is licensed?*

SCHULZ: Well, I have control over everything. My contract gives control. They can't do anything without my okay and I can do anything I want, as long as it does not destroy the property.

GROTH: *Are there certain ways that you would not want your property licensed, that you would veto?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. They're always dropping it down to make it too childlike and I don't like that. But I just can't get around it. Now they're coming out with the Snoopy quarterly magazine, which will be for very small children. But they promised it would be good quality. They're the same ones that put out Muppets magazine. It's a good outfit, I guess. They came out and visited us last week. Well, what do I care? [Laughter.]

GROTH: *Do you ever feel like you're losing control?*

SCHULZ: No. But I'm getting old. I'll be 65 in November. And I wonder what is happening to me? Someday, you're going to be old. [Laughter.]

MARSCHALL: *Does that mean you're thinking of withdrawing to the strip and letting other people pay attention to the merchandising? That doesn't show in the strip. I mean, you have introduced new characters.*

SCHULZ: Oh, no. No, the only reason that licensing keeps getting bigger is the fact that it's simply more popular now. United Features, which never even had a licensing department before, suddenly had this enormous licensing property and we had people devoted exclusively just to looking at other companies and finding licensed properties and things, which we never did. Everything we ever did came to us, really. We never went out and sought anything. So now licensing is very big, but I'm involved with it only to the point where I want to see it done as decently as possible.



GROTH: *I have a couple more questions I would like to ask you. One thing I am curious about is if you are a politically oriented person.*

SCHULZ: No. I was brought up Republican. I saw Herbert Hoover get off the train in St. Paul when he was running for re-election. And I saw Eisenhower once when we went to Minneapolis and we all stood out on the street... but I was very taken by Wendel Wilkie when I was young. I was calling myself an Eisenhower Republican, because he was the first person I ever voted for that got elected [laughter]. Gosh, you know, for twenty years we were under Democratic rule. Twenty solid years and then... But I sold a cartoon because of Dewey losing that morning. When I came back to Art Instruction that morning, of course Truman had won and some woman came in who had voted for Wallace. She still was glad Dewey had lost. Somebody said, "How did you sleep last night?" I said, "Oh, I sleep well enough at night, it's living during the day I find so hard," and I sold it to the *Saturday Evening Post*. So I figure I got \$80.00 out of the election anyway. But I've never been involved in local politics or done anything. I've met President Carter and President Reagan. He called me on the phone when I was recovering from surgery, which was quite flattering.

GROTH: *Do you have any loosely defined political leanings?*



SCHULZ: No, no, I don't even want to get into that. It's the same as the religious thing. I'm not especially fond of all political cartooning. I think a lot of it is irresponsible. These guys write about things they really don't know anything about. They leap on the bandwagon the day after something happens and draw things that aren't even true. And some of them are terribly petty on both sides. I've had troubles with them in times past with them using my characters. Only one time in maybe thirty some guy drawing for one of the Chicago papers was using my characters for something the exact opposite of what I believed in. It reminded me of Bill Mauldin and his suit against the *Los Angeles Times*...

MARSCHALL: *Conrad?*

SCHULZ: Conrad. Yeah: because he used Willie and Joe in a cartoon in a way that offended Mauldin without asking him.

GROTH: *One of the remarkable things about the strip is that there are no perceivable ideologies.*

SCHULZ: [Laughter.] Sort of a wishy-washiness...

GROTH: *No, no, not at all... It's really remarkable, because there are so many shrill ideologies.*

SCHULZ: Well, I do think about it. I really don't want to offend people and I don't think it's necessary. I think



it can be funny and remain kind of innocent and yet I don't think you have to be sugary sweet or stupid.

GROTH: *This is a sort of cliché question, but I'll ask it anyway: Can you tell us what you think the future or potential of comics is?*

SCHULZ: Depends on the editors. I don't think we have any choice. I think we're totally at the mercy of the editors and whatever they're going to do with these comic pages. And if it keeps up the way it's going now... I think there are good futures for a lot of people. I know they're buying all sorts of new things and all that. I don't think it's necessarily going to produce great new superstars. And I'm not just talking about just making a lot of money: I'm talking about somebody really great. Obviously, *Calvin and Hobbes* is one that seems to have the opportunity to do something really great and I don't know if it will or not. It's difficult because of the space you have.

GROTH: *Do you think that the new formats coming out, such as book-length comic books, will have some...*

SCHULZ: I don't think comic books have anything to do with it, do you? Oh, do you mean the reprints of comic strips?

GROTH: *No, I'm talking about the new formats that are being published.*

SCHULZ: I haven't seen them.

GROTH: *Have you heard of Art Spiegelman's Maus?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure, sure.

GROTH: *That's the sort of thing I'm talking about, because you get away from the space restrictions and the editors.*

SCHULZ: Yeah, yeah. But I suppose, again, that they're at the mercy of the publishers and the distributors and it's a whole different profession; it's something that is totally foreign to me. What I think is a pity is something like that can't be transferred to the comics page. The newspapers won't even listen to this, but the potential is there and I think there's a lot of great children's book illustrators who should be in the comic pages, but are not.

GROTH: *Have you resisted the temptation to take a vacation?*

SCHULZ: Quit for a year? So far I've resisted it.

GROTH: *But you've had the temptation?*

SCHULZ: I never thought I would, but the last few years, all my friends are retiring and I'm beginning to

wonder if I hadn't wasted my life. Yeah, wait 'til you're 65 or 64.

MARSHALL: *You mean that literally?*

SCHULZ: Mm-hm. Not that I don't think I've done as best as I ever could with what abilities I have. I'm very happy and I've done more than I've ever dreamed I would do. Things have happened to me that I never dreamed of, and so I'll die content, as far as that goes. But there's still a big world out there that I don't know anything about and I'm married now to a woman who loves to travel and I'm thinking, Gosh, maybe there is more. And of course, I'm not very well educated so maybe I should get back to school and learn how to speak French or something like that, or go to Cambridge. There are just so many things that I could be doing.

And after you've had heart surgery, too, and were on the brink of dying at 58 and you begin to wonder, then, too. How do I know when the arteries are going to close up and bang, it's all over. Do I just want to sit here and just draw another daily strip?

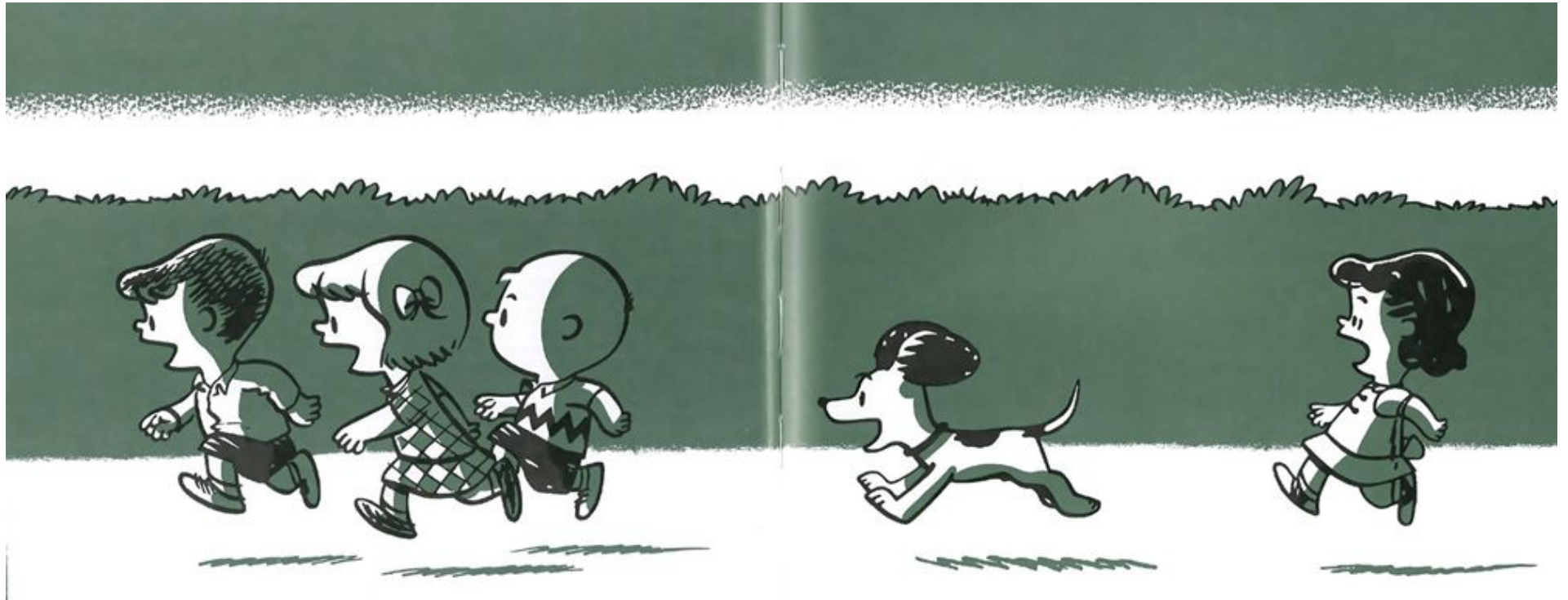
MARSHALL: *Sparky, you did one of the tenderest—that's the only word I can find—continuities you've ever done after that. It was different than other things, but it wasn't out of step with the strip.*

SCHULZ: That was where Charlie Brown was in the hospital?



MARSHALL: *Yes, and it was like a composer shifting to a minor key for a while. You survived a quadruple bypass?*

SCHULZ: Yes. That's like what I was telling you about coming home from the Army and suddenly, I'm a man, you know. I've done this and I'm feeling good about myself. I thought, "Boy, I don't want to go to the hospital, they're going to saw my chest open. I'm not that brave. I don't want to go anyplace. I don't want to do anything. I don't know if I can stand this." But I remember my kids saying, "But you'd better do this, dad, if you want to play tennis and hockey again. You'd better do it." And I went to the surgery and they explained what they did and they said, "It doesn't hurt when they saw your chest in half. It doesn't hurt at all." Well, [my wife] Jeannie and I thought about it for a couple of months. So I did it and I thought, "Boy, if I do this, I'll really feel good about myself." But that first night in the hospital, when they take you in and they take away all your clothes and you've got to take a shower and they come in and give you a pill, I thought, "Do I want to do this?" I've gotten on airplanes and I've gotten off before the plane has taken off because I didn't want to travel, I've backed out of things for years. I said, "I could get my clothes now and I could go home. I don't have to do this. I could go home and just take it easy and maybe survive, but I'll make a complete fool out of myself if I do



it and my wife will be ashamed of me and my kids will be ashamed of me." So I went to sleep and the next morning, it all happened. So I thought, "Boy, if I survive this, I'll feel great." But I'm still the same person now [laughter] that I always was. It didn't change me much. I still had the same fears I've always had. But if you don't have the surgery—I've talked to other guys—every time you go to sleep at night, you wonder if you're going to wake up in the morning. If you go away, if you go to New York and you're in a hotel room and maybe had too much to eat or something that night, your stomach is feeling kind of funny and you twist and you wonder, "Is this the night that last artery closes?" You can't live that way, which is why I decided to go ahead to do it. I've never put in my years that I promised that I would put in.

MARSCHALL: *Promised to whom?*

SCHULZ: The syndicate president, when he took over—see, I was ready to quit—we argued with the president for almost three years over what was going to happen. I said, "I want to own this thing. I'm tired of you selling Charlie Brown razor blades in Germany without telling me. I want to be able to do what I want to do and I don't want you doing anything but the strip. Either I get my way, or I'm going to quit." This guy, he couldn't understand it at all. "You make more money than everybody else. You want more?" I said, "Yeah, but I earn more,

I've done more. You see, I don't want more money. I just want control so you guys don't ruin it." Well, fortunately, he retired. [His successor] came in and he and I sat down and within five minutes, he could see how sensitive it was. All I was asking is that they don't ruin it.

GROTH: *Mr. Schulz, if you were as militant about controlling the strip as that, why wouldn't you be similarly militant about newspapers running it large?*

SCHULZ: Because of what I said before: I don't think it's fair for me to dictate to the editors who are really my customers. And because so many of them, for so many years, like *The Chronicle*, run it in the same place for thirty five years now and suddenly, to force them to change the whole thing around just because I want more space, I just think that would be too egotistical.

But if it's something that I really want, I'll go for it. I never quit, too.

Rick Marschall is a widely respected newspaper strip historian. He edited Nemo: The Classic Comics Library from 1983 to 1989; packaged many collections of classic strips, such as Popeye, Little Nemo in Slumberland, and Polly and Her Pals; and has written extensively about comic strips.



Gary Groth is the co-founder of Fantagraphics Books. He has edited The Comics Journal from 1976 to the present, written about comics, and conducted interviews with over a hundred cartoonists.



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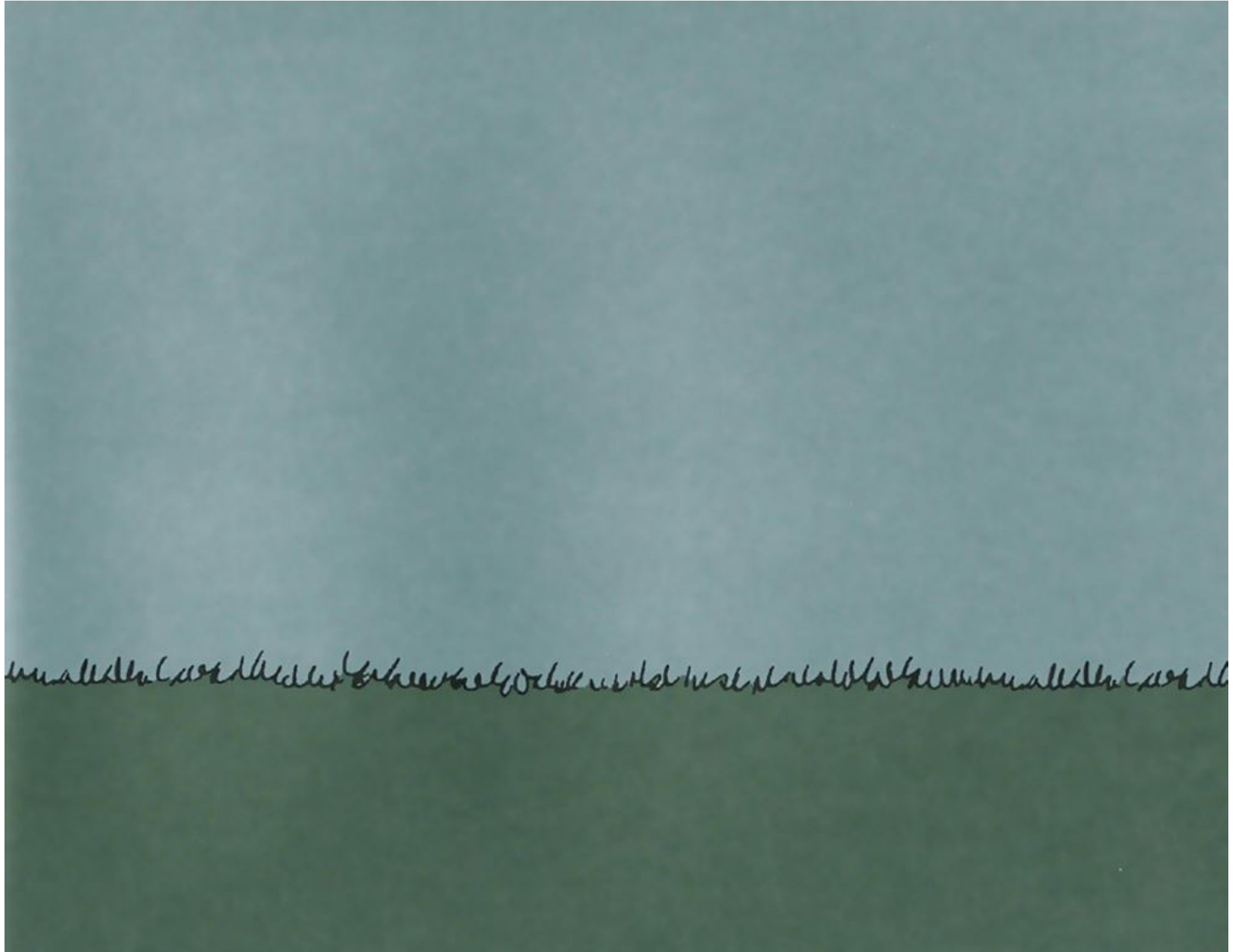
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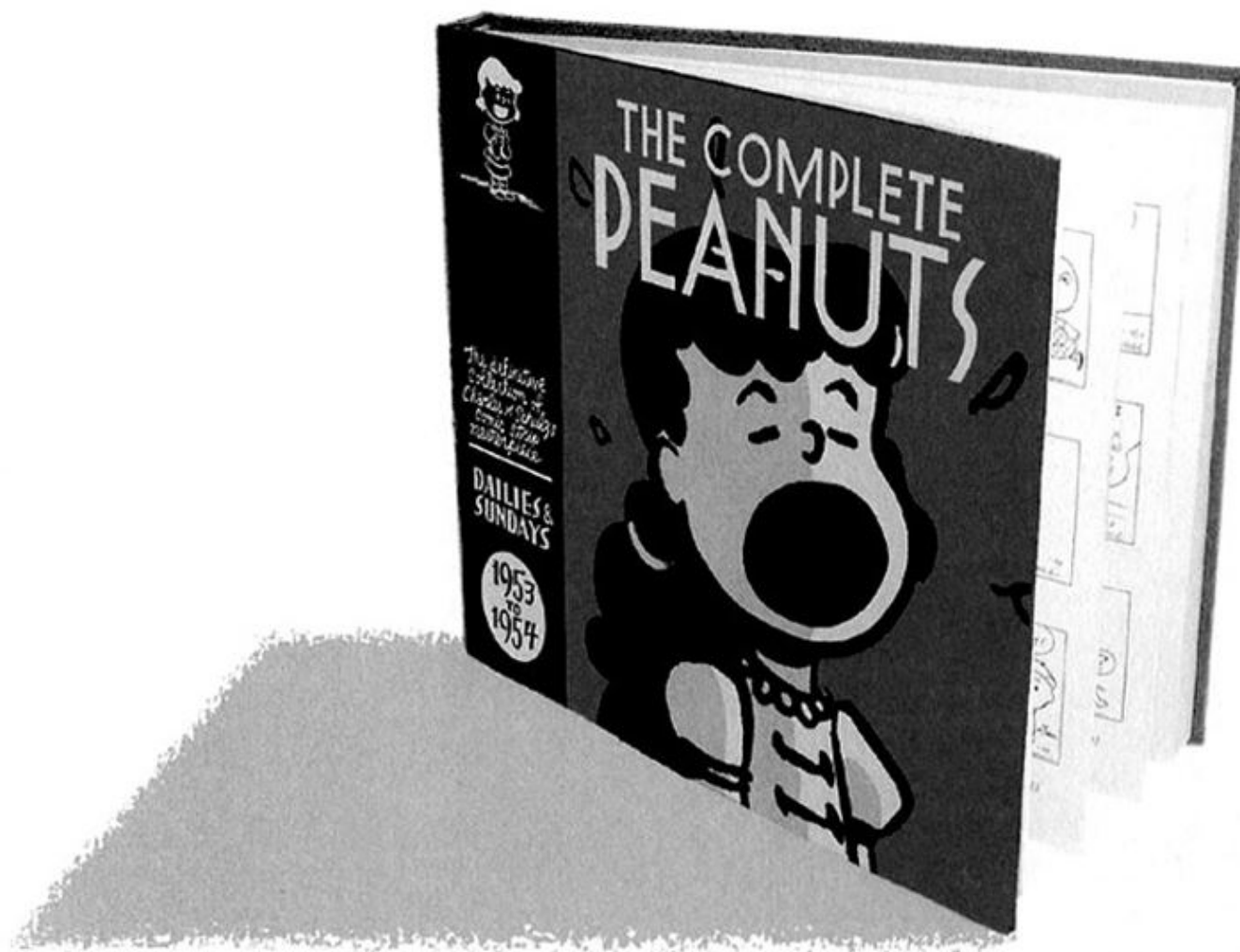
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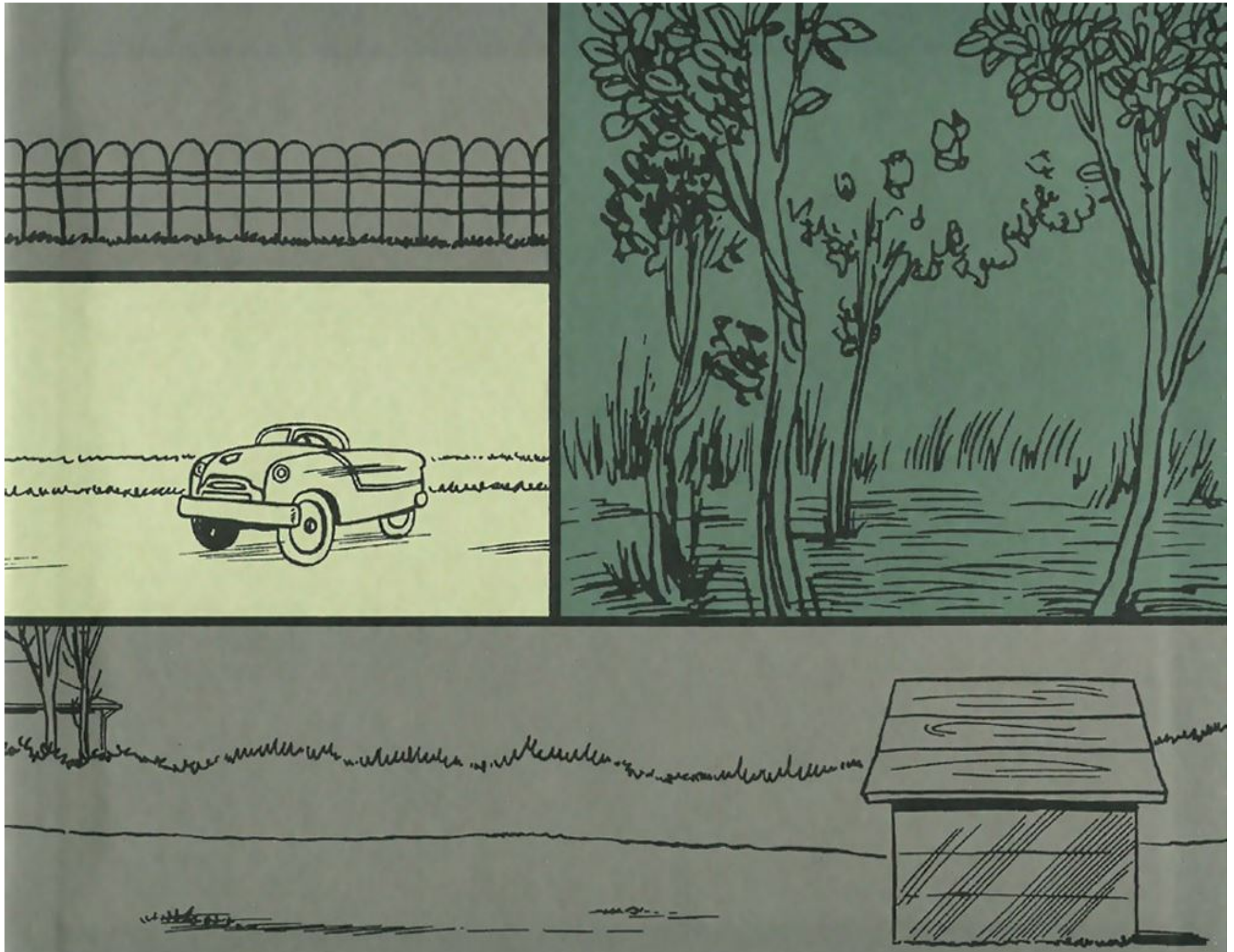


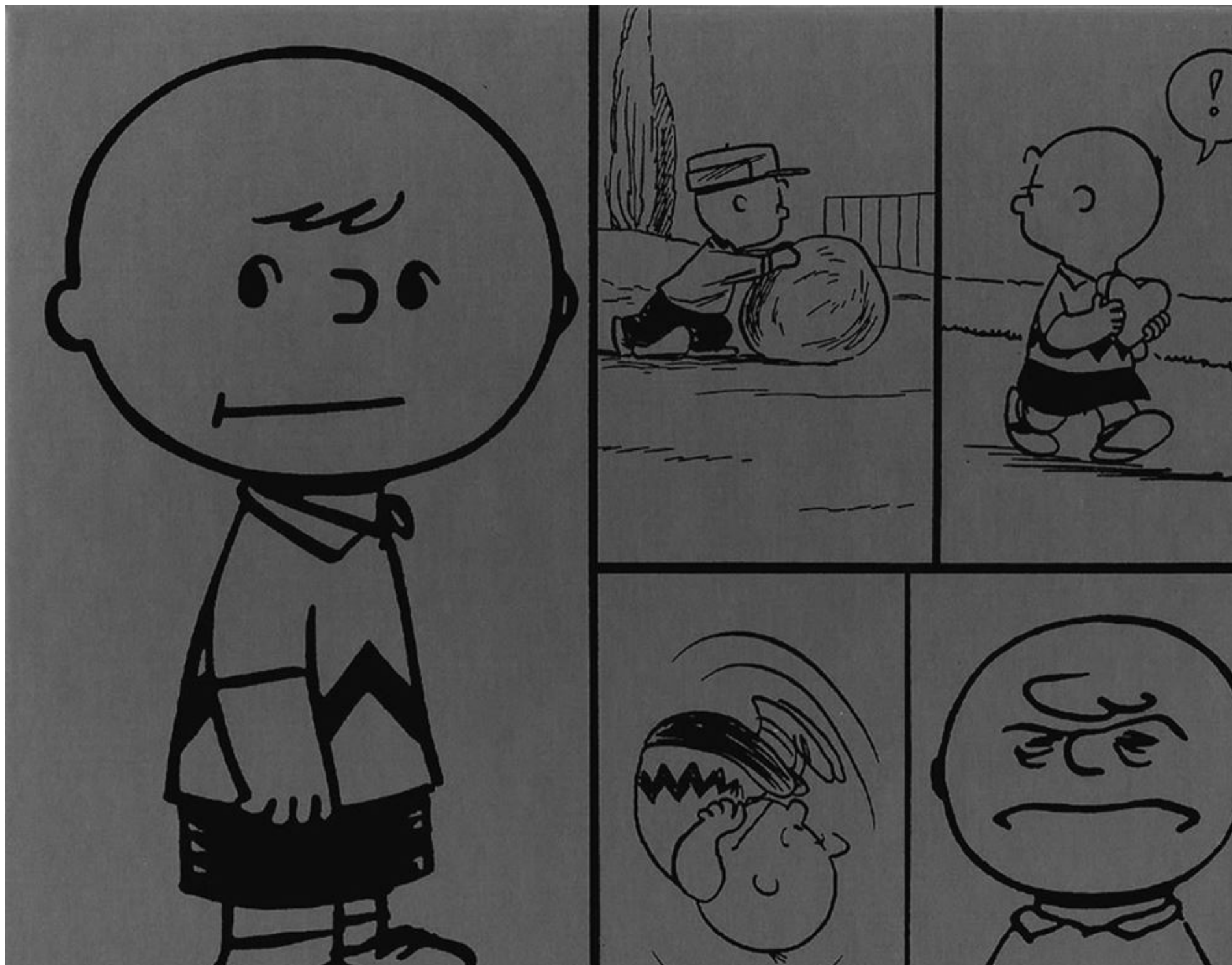


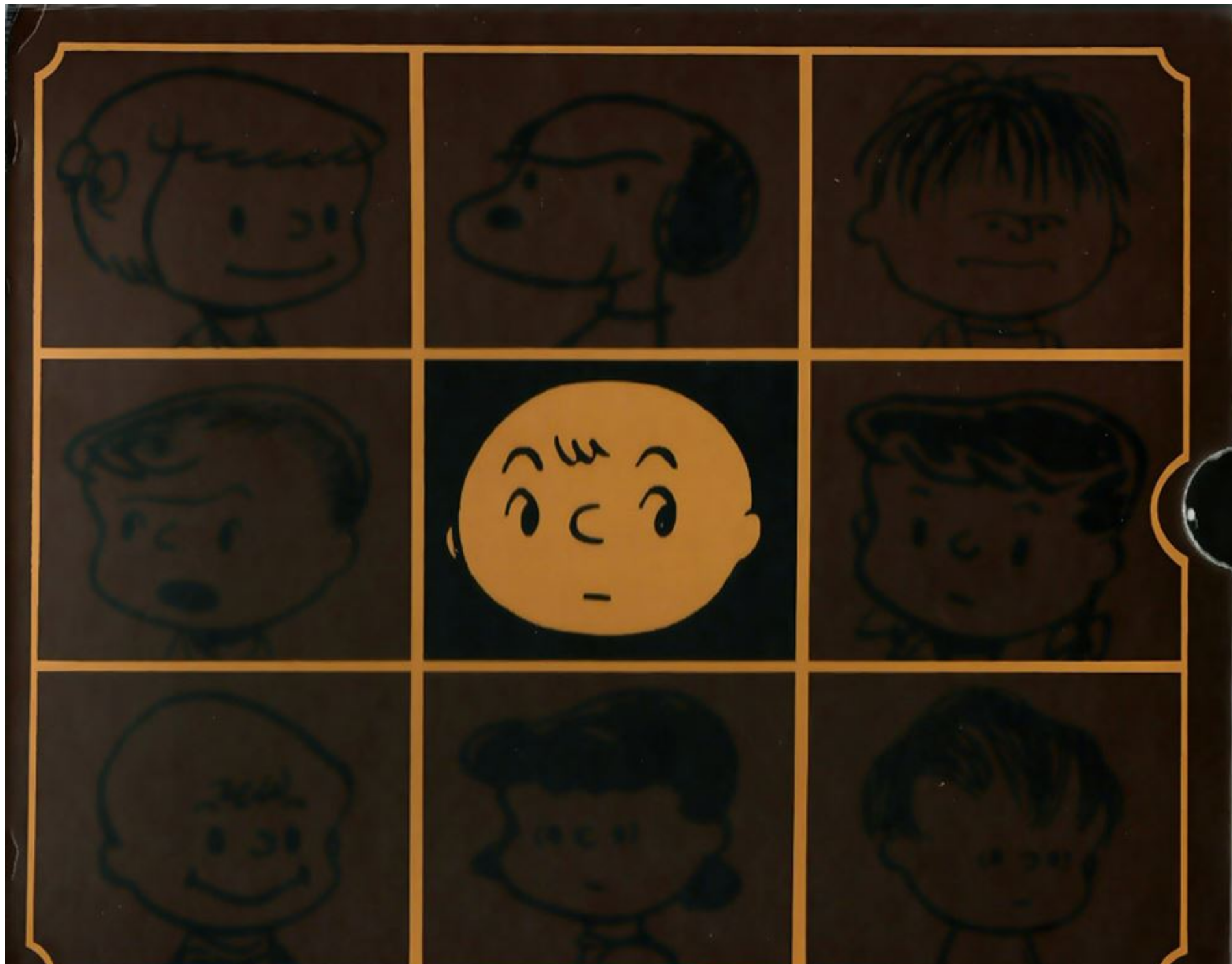
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Lucy initiates her one-sided flirtation with Schroeder... Linus's first thought balloon... Linus speaks... Charlie Brown loses his 10,000th checkers game in a row... the first rained-out baseball game... the "golf tournament" sequence with the visible adults... Linus acquires his security blanket... "Charlotte Braun's" brief career as a cast member... and the introduction of "Pig-Pen"!













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